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The relationship between parent involvement and student achievement in general and advanced-level English courses.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN GENERAL AND ADVANCED LEVEL ENGLISH COURSES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement of high school students. Twenty-two questions from a parent questionnaire developed by Ingels, Thalji, Pulliam, Bartor, and Frankel (1994) were used to measure parent involvement. The questions focused on the family's background, the teenager's school life, the parent's contact with the school, the teenager's family life, and the teen's friends. Moreover, student final grades, student attendance record, and the number of student referrals to the discipline office were obtained.

The sample consisted of 245 grade ten high school students from an urban Ontario secondary school. General level students experienced statistically significant higher rates of suspension from school in comparison to advanced level students. Parents of general level students contacted the school more often about teens' plans after leaving high school, attendance, and behaviour and were more knowledgeable about how well their teenagers were performing in school. Parents of the advanced level students were less satisfied with the range of available programs. For students in the advance level, there was a statistically significant relationship between attendance, final grades, and the number of times students were referred to the discipline office.

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I would like to wish all the best to the parents who embraced this research and completed the sixteen-page questionnaire without hesitation. They are bound to reap the rewards of a partnership with the school as their children meet with future successes.

My respect and utmost admiration belong to my friend and my mentor, Jeff Hucul. He is the master teacher with children, adolescents, and adults alike. His words of encouragement and never ending support created a safe place for me to experiment with my talents and build the self-confidence that was critical to my successful completion of this project. You are forever in my heart and always in my prayers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Student achievement or the lack thereof is the subject of much controversy for educators and politicians alike. Politicians seem to believe that increasing parent involvement through the creation of school councils may provide the necessary type of involvement that will increase student achievement. School councils are only one venue to consider when looking at the issue of parent involvement. There are many aspects to consider when examining the type and the amount of parent involvement that may impact student achievement. The aspects considered in this study include the families' backgrounds, teenagers' school lives, parent contact with the school, and teenagers' family lives, friends, and activities in the community.

A. General Statement of the Problem

The current philosophy of the Ontario Ministry of Education separates high school instruction into three major levels: advanced, general, and basic. The intent is to provide a level of instruction appropriate to the student's skills and achievement. The most common method of reporting student achievement is by way of parent/teacher interviews. Poor attendance at parent/teacher interviews provides a clear indication that an important stakeholder is missing in the educational process: the parents both directly at school and at home. This might suggest that parents and teachers have failed to develop a true partnership when it comes to teaching young people. Poor student behavior and academic performance often result in teachers and parents taking defensive positions rather than working in a collaborative fashion. An adversarial relationship between parents and teachers is not in the best interest of anyone, nor does it

foster student achievement or social-emotional development and growth.

Parents can influence their children's achievement through direct involvement with school activities, such as helping with homework, course selection, attending parent-teacher interviews, or through specific encouragement of school success by setting and maintaining high performance standards. Teachers seem to believe that the difficulties many students at the general level face in relation to their academic performance may be the result of limited parent involvement, both with the child and the school. This limited parent involvement could be the result of differing values, time commitments, and insufficient energies for both school and social activities. Educators must recognize that there is a difference between parents' overall involvement with children and the level of their involvement with children's education.

Educators, policy leaders, and researchers seem to focus on the family's responsibilities for their children's success, as if schools merely complete what families begin in their children's education. This may lead to dangerous assumptions about students in general level courses who are often labeled "high-risk" due to family characteristics. Some educators, policy leaders, and researchers focus on the school's responsibilities to motivate and teach students, as if families have nothing to do with their children's education. This may result in the onus being placed on the education system for student failure. Rather than placing the blame exclusively on either one or the other, schools and families need to understand that by working together they can significantly increase student achievement.

The mutual interests and overlapping influences of schools and families should not be overlooked. A climate in which a partnership is created between schools and

families may provide an opportunity to work toward shared goals in the best interest of the child and the community. This partnership would create a connection between home and school by which students can successfully achieve. Parents may be seen as bearing the responsibility for initiating contact with the schools, but schools must actively search out ways to initiate contact with parents in order to work toward the objective of increasing parent-school connections. The absence of adequate communications from the school could result in families not fully understanding many adolescents' potential or options in school. This may lead to parents accepting too little from both the schools and their children. Parents, as partners in education, can facilitate children's learning, development, and success through informative exchanges and interactions between schools, families, and communities.

B. Definition of Terms

Achievement: for the purposes of this study, achievement is defined by final grades at the end of each semester in English class.

Advanced Level Student: any student registered in a grade 10 advanced level English class. Advanced level curriculum focuses on the study of literature and is geared toward students who plan to attend university following high school.

General Level Student: any student registered in a grade 10 general level English class. General level curriculum provides for a more individualized student learning program and is geared toward students who plan to attend college or enter the world of work upon high school graduation.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the United States Department of Education. This governmental agency was the primary sponsor of NELS:88.

National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88): this study began in 1988 with the eighth-grade class of that year. Data was collected in 1988, 1990, and 1992 on student school experiences, as well as background information from school administrators, teachers, and parents. The objective of this research was to learn about students' educational experiences and outcomes from eighth grade through high school and beyond (Ingels, Thalji, Pulliam, Bartot & Frankel, 1994).

Parent Involvement: operationally defined by the "parent questionnaire" as the degree of knowledge a parent has about the teenager's school life and the amount of parent contact with the teenager's school.

Student Behaviour: is operationally defined as the number of times a student is suspended from school, expelled from school, or referred to the discipline office.

Student PIN: every student will be issued a personal identification number to maintain each individual's anonymity.

C. Research Question and Hypotheses

The review of literature does not address the differences between students at the advanced and general levels with regard to parent involvement as it relates to student achievement. For this reason, a research question is posed to determine whether there are any differences between the two groups in this regard. The hypotheses are based on previous research, which links student behaviour problems and attendance to

achievement. For the purposes of this research, the following question and hypotheses are investigated:

Question 1: Are parents of students at the advanced and general levels involved in their teenagers' school lives in the same way?

Hypotheses:

1. There is a relationship between parent involvement and student achievement in general and advanced level English courses.
2. There is a relationship between student behaviour problems and achievement.
3. There is a relationship between attendance and achievement.

D. Significance of the Proposed Study

The literature shows that students whose parents are more involved in their children's education tend to achieve at higher levels. Many factors need to be examined prior to implementing parent partnership programs, particularly with regard to general level students. The data to be collected will provide baseline information on the current level of parent participation and a starting point to establish the role that parent involvement plays in a teenager's education.

The findings will provide a basis for program development and implementation in the ongoing efforts to increase parent involvement with schools, their children, and the community. The correlation between parent involvement and the three variables identified as achievement in this study will identify specific factors to consider in the creation of intervention programs that focus on increasing both parent involvement and student achievement. School board officials and education administrators in individual schools may benefit from the research findings as they attempt to develop specific parent

involvement strategies designed to foster certain kinds of parent involvement. Schools that propose to successfully implement parent involvement programs need to be in a position to define the roles and the responsibilities of parents and to establish the criteria to measure the types of success that are closely related to parent involvement programs rather than to student achievement test scores.

The Ontario Ministry of Education requires that each school have a Parent Advisory Council in an effort to more fully involve parents in the decision-making process that impacts their children. These councils must include representation from parents, students, teaching staff, community members, and a school administrator. The results of this study may provide information to members of these school councils that could facilitate a proactive approach with respect to increasing both parent involvement and student achievement in schools across Ontario.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. Introduction

Although research in relation to parent involvement and student achievement spanned many years, the focus of this literature review covered three decades. This chronological review of the literature began with an examination of the research of the 1970's, was extended to the 1980's, and concluded with the research of the 1990's. The generous sampling of research from the 1990's provided a current overview of both theories and practices that were pertinent to this study.

B. Barriers to Home-School Connections

The old nature-nurture controversy focused on the interaction between what individuals had inherited genetically and the environment in which they lived (Caldwell, 1971). The mystery of parenthood was experienced not only through realizing what a marvel the newborn was but also through projecting what the child could become. Caldwell maintained that learning began much earlier than many had thought possible, that was at birth with the parents as the child's first teachers.

The possibility of creating partnerships between parents and teachers required an investigation from educational, sociological, and psychological perspectives (Bond, 1973). An in-depth investigation in these three areas may have provided a basis to change the hierarchical and authoritarian school set-ups that exhibited virtually non-existent worthwhile parent-teacher relationships. Although initiatives that created an inter-active homework program appeared to increase parent-child interaction and home-school

connections, teachers seemed to lose a sense of power since they were no longer the sole agent in the child's learning experiences.

The students who went to colleges of education came predominantly from middle-class families (Burgess, 1973). The background and education of teachers was quite different from those of most children they taught. Individual schools differed in the extent to which they welcomed parents; some were open and free, others formal and forbidding.

Data from the Five Towns study (Lortie, 1975) indicated that parents' actions ranged from strong help and indifference to hostility, and that the parents' level of actions had an important effect on the students' behaviour in class. Most teachers wanted more contact with parents when their children were having trouble in school and felt that contact with parents was justified only when difficulties arose. The teacher was seen as the gatekeeper by determining when parents had a part to play in school. For example, teachers wanted to see parents when their children had problems; whereas, parents who visited without invitation were seen as interruptions. The good parent took the lead from the teacher, and there was no contest for leadership. There was a teacher territory and a parent territory through which teachers sought to ensure both independence and support and preferred a physical separation with teacher control over parents' access to the school.

Gordon (1976) suggested that the American family had surrendered many of its character development functions to the television set, the peer group, and other forces. Since the 1930's, there was considerable consolidation of schools and much of the local flavour was lost. The large school districts made it difficult to maintain a modern home-

school partnership. Teachers no longer lived near the schools in which they taught, and busing was a way of life for many children in the school system. The common value system of the home and school had given way to a cultural pluralism, thus exposing children to a variety of value systems. The most common role of parents was to act as an audience that was informed by the school regarding its activities. Parents were involved as direct and active teachers of their own children and needed support and help in specific areas:

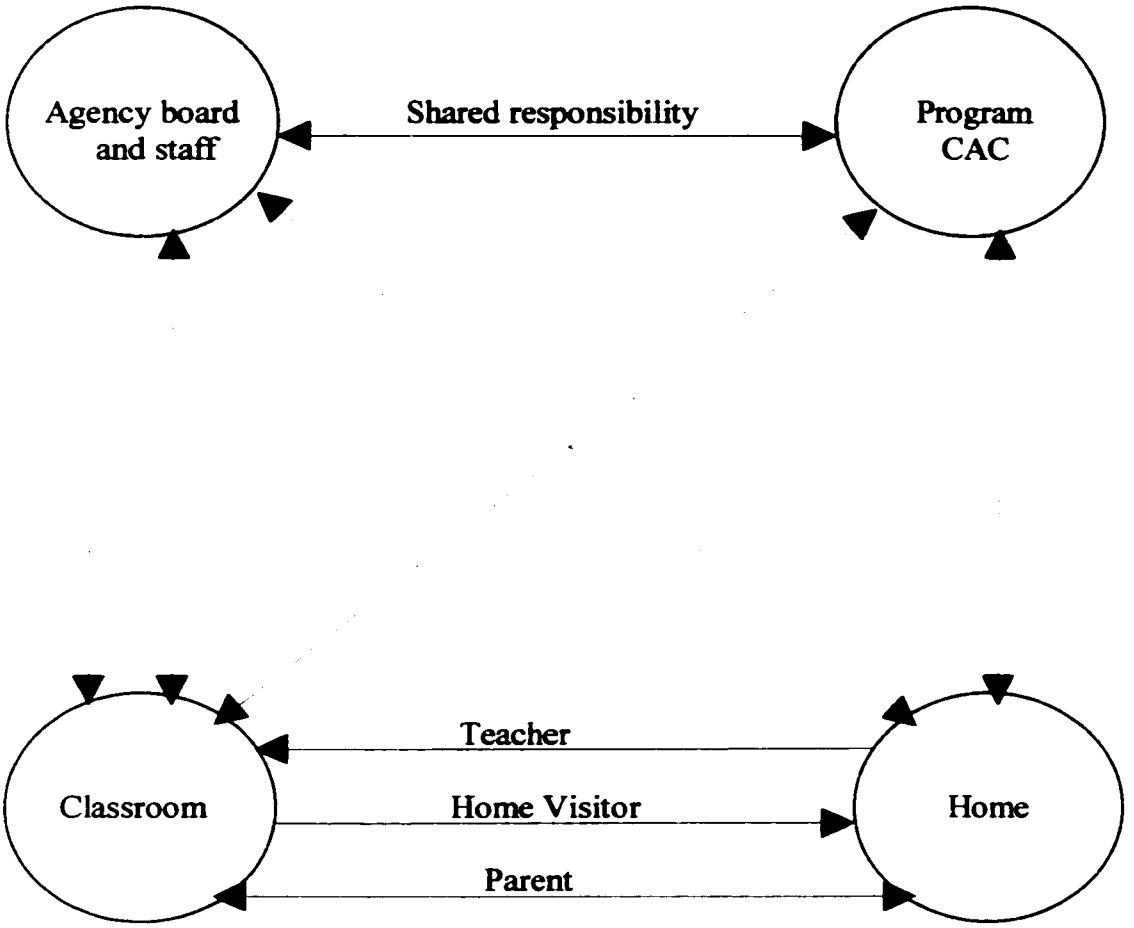
1. procedures and activities that they had not thought about;
2. making decisions that were soundly based in child development;
3. using and expanding upon what they knew; and
4. encouragement to share with other parents what had worked well for them.

The teacher had been held accountable for the total burden of responsibility that should not be carried by any one person or institution. Although each community had to establish its own priorities, any program needed to be viewed as a system in which the various parts were dependent upon each other for success (see Figure A).

Larrick (1976) asserted that children who had been told to shut up, labeled as stupid or lazy, and had no experience with books lacked the vocabulary for simple conversation and were so insecure that they avoided the risk of raising questions, expressing independent ideas, or exploring the printed word. The child, who had been read to at home, felt secure enough to ask questions, ventured solutions, and did well in reading at school. Larrick maintained that parents and the home environment made the difference, even though times had changed to the point where often the only voice the young child counted on was the television voice. Larrick reported about the University of

FIGURE A

TOWARD A HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP



Agency board may be board of education, community action agency, city commission, 4C board, child development agency, or Tribe Program. Citizens Advisory Council may be in a single school, or total system, or may be total system with school representatives. Classroom or center may be public school, high school, nursery school, day care center, and so on. Teacher's prime responsibility is classroom; parents' prime responsibility is home; home visitor's prime responsibility is the relationship between the individual home and the individual classroom. Agency and CAC share responsibilities for the program, and for the provision of such comprehensive services as health, guidance, social services, nutrition, dental care, and the like.

Gordon, I. J., & Breivogel, W. F. (1976). Building effective home-school relationships. Boston Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon Inc.

Florida sponsored home learning program for 200 preschool children that involved weekly visits by paraprofessionals who showed the mothers how to engage in learning activities. Too many adults failed to understand the importance of oral language as a prerequisite to progress with written language. This home learning program reinforced the philosophy that all parents deserved the opportunity to enrich the intellects of their children, and that public education needed to assure the availability of this opportunity to all.

Gordon (1977) examined assumptions that surrounded parent involvement and parent education in the context of three different systems: the Family Impact Model (FIM), the School Impact Model (SIM), and the Community Impact Model (CIM). The FIM indicated that parent education from a local agency or school was designed to have an impact on the family so that the child fit the school and the system's goals. Parent involvement for the SIM required a form of parent education that differed from learning to improve one's home. The CIM was represented by a comprehensive service component that clearly improved the health of many children and brought many formerly powerless people into the political mainstream. Gordon maintained that efforts in all three models needed to be continued and to be enlarged by using the CIM while strengthening the FIM and SIM models. Rather than continued efforts of a piecemeal, unsynthesized, small-scale, and sporadic nature, future efforts needed to be placed in the broader social system context.

Harris (1978) asserted that initiating venues to improve teacher-parent communication and establishing parent involvement were not easy tasks. Teachers appeared to be responsible for both defining and developing positive relationships with

parents. Teachers needed to be generous with their time and needed to be available for parents' questions and comments. Harris developed a number of projects that allowed parents to feel at ease in a comfortable setting:

1. contacting parents in the spring;
2. visiting the home of each incoming student during the summer;
3. holding a work-night at the school to construct materials for the classroom;
4. relying on frequent phone calls to maintain contact with parents;
5. creating a classroom newsletter; and
6. arranging a Saturday school day once each year.

Over a three-year period, more than 90% of the mothers and fathers of the students accepted an invitation and went to school with their child. Forging a partnership helped the adults to see one another as human beings with a common interest - children.

Parents and teachers negotiated negative territoriality practices which commonly created stereotypes of one another, and which suggested a level of ambiguity regarding the role each must play in the life of children (Lightfoot, 1978; Deem & Brehony, 1993). The school had been regarded as the forceful and dominant institution that projected middle-class values and stability, while families (especially minority and poor groups) were seen as the reluctant, uncooperative consumers who rarely initiated positive and productive interactions on behalf of their children. An effort was subsequently made to clarify the areas of responsibility and competence between parents and teachers. In the "best interest of the child," productive collaboration between family and school demanded parents and teachers recognize the critical importance of each other's participation in the life of the child. Researchers had failed to address the fact that the

walls of the classroom often precluded parents from becoming more involved in student achievement.

Livingstone (1978) administered a 60-question survey to 1,024 Ontario citizens and 114 corporate executives. The findings suggested that the general public wanted to see local teachers, parents, and students all involved in local decision-making. This marked a period of potential major changes in educational institutions. Nineteen percent of the citizen respondents perceived that parents in a local community exherted influence on local schools; whereas, forty-percent was the actual desired level of influence for parents on local schools.

Parents could and must be involved in a meaningful way in the education of their children (Brandt, 1979; Cavazos, 1989). Teachers needed to build partnerships with parents if they were to make them feel accepted. Brandt found that most children who performed below grade level had been enrolled after the opening of the school year and who often were absent. Cavazos recommended that parents take responsibility for their children's school attendance, discipline, and homework in partnerships with schools that initiated regular contacts with parents.

C. Positive School and Family Connections

Research studies related to the junior and senior years of high school indicated that parents participated less in school activities than they had during the elementary school years, even though child development specialists and parents realized that parent involvement was necessary more than previously believed (Berger, 1981). Between 1970 and 1980, parents began to question programs and their participation with schools and teachers. Berger suggested that parents and schools must work together in a partnership

in order to promote a functional education system work. He also found that parents were interested in participating.

Much of the research to date had been of a correlational design. Blechman, Kotanchik, and Taylor (1981) developed a 3 x 2 repeated measures experimental design, which examined the general effects on achievement of family problem-solving training, and a home-note system. A no-treatment group of students was identified as inconsistent. Students were identified as either most inconsistent or stable on the basis of their daily class work. This study involved 13 elementary classrooms in which students in grades 2 to 5 were identified as inconsistent and randomly assigned to an experimental and an untreated anonymous control condition. The findings of Blechman et al. indicated that parent involvement resulted in children who produced high-quality work even when their classmates' work dropped in quality. Such students worked hard regardless of whether or not a reward was involved. The study was inconclusive in establishing whether specific parent involvement strategies implemented by the school, particularly with students registered in general level education, produced similar results.

In conjunction with a climbing divorce rate during the 1980's, there appeared to be a reduced parent interest that considered adolescent children as full family members subject to parental attention and authority. There was also a reduced willingness on the part of adolescents to acknowledge traditional family constraints and obligations (Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1982). Research of student achievement under such conditions had shown the importance of family involvement and strong home-school connections.

According to Apter (1982), professionals who worked with troubled children discovered the critical importance of coordinating their efforts with their counterparts in public school settings. Families not only supplemented the school's educational program, but also were the critical system by which youngsters learned both to satisfy their needs and to cope. Much of what was considered academic or social failure actually may have been due to ineffective school-family interactions. Parents of troubled children especially required home-school programs in order to exert a real and lasting impact on their youngsters.

Parent involvement activities appeared to fall into two categories, effective or indifferent (Lyons, Robbins & Smith, 1982). Active parents, well-organized projects or tasks, and a facilitating staff all characterized effective activities. Indifferent practices were the result of situations in which both school and parents regarded parent involvement as a requirement rather than an opportunity.

The closeness of parent-child relationships proved to be important to the development of children's values (Kohn, 1983). Schools often appeared to teach children to value conformity to authority and in the higher grades promoted self-direction by the organizing of values in ways conducive to their valuing one or the other. Kohn suggested that the transmission of values in the family was only one aspect of a much more general process by which a child's conditions of life in home, school, and the larger social world came to shape that child's values.

To assess the formal aspects of parent involvement Keesling and Melaragno (1983) studied four federal education programs in the United States and have identified five parent involvement functions:

1. governance (decision making);
2. educational (paraprofessionals, volunteers, or tutors of their own children);
3. school support (both tangible and intangible);
4. community-school relations (communication and interpersonal relations); and
5. parent education (personal learning experiences).

This study focused on governance and educational functions to a greater degree than the other three functions. The findings supported the use of legislation and regulation as powerful forces that fostered and supported parent involvement. The Ontario Royal Commission on Learning initiated by the Minister of Education (1994) recommended implementing Parent Advisory Councils to increase the level of parent involvement in Ontario schools.

Teaching professionals had not seen parent education as a major professional responsibility (Schaefer, 1983). Neither had teachers accepted the role of supporting the parent's education of the child in the home or the role of egalitarian collaboration with the parent, even though individual teachers had highly ranked these goals of parent-teacher interactions. Parents needed to recognize that a child's education was not exclusively the responsibility of the school.

Epstein (1983) hypothesized that the congruence of family and school authority structures would increase student satisfaction in school, while the incongruence of authority structures in the two environments (where the school emphasized decision making and the family did not) was important for growth in independence. Longitudinal data was used to study 960 eighth grade students in ten middle schools in Maryland. The results confirmed the continuing influence on middle school and high school students of

both family and school environments. School environments were considered especially important for students from families that did not emphasize participation in decisions at home. It was recommended that parents be helped to understand that as they socialized their children at home, they were influencing how the children behaved and succeeded in school.

A review of the literature by Stewart-Clarke (1983) proposed and evaluated five popular myths based on the assumptions that surrounded parent involvement and its success. The five identified myths of parent education were closely linked to the implementation of school policies:

1. an empirical foundation for parent education existed in the "basic" research literature in child development;
2. parent programs had been evaluated and the effects of parent education were known;
3. the kinds of parent education programs that worked best had been identified;
4. how parent education worked was understood; and
5. parent education was more effective than other kinds of social programs.

The identification of these assumptions indicated that there were several important research variables that required closer examination in relation to the depth and variety of parent education. Stewart-Clarke forewarned of the complexity of policy issues yet to be addressed and of the need for causal analysis between parent and child variables over a period of time. There was little support indicating parent education programs had been more effective than those involving the child or those focusing exclusively on the child as in the case of early childhood education.

The Parent Education Follow Through Program (PEFTP) examined an outcome measure of program as well as a measurement of a process variable which may have been related to child outcome measures (Olmstead & Rubin, 1983). A relationship between parental teaching and child school performance was demonstrated. Socioeconomic status also strongly influenced the home environment and less strongly influenced parent involvement. The number of years of participation in the program was also related to child achievement. Parent involvement in their children's education was both directly and indirectly associated with positive changes in child achievement. The home environment also directly impacted child achievement.

Parents, Child and Teachers (PACT) grew out of the work of the Pitfield Project in 1979 (Griffiths, 1984). The findings suggested that children learned first and foremost from their parents. Children learned more from their parents in the first five years of life than they did from their schools in ten years. Once these children made the transition from home to school, many working-class parents approached their children's schools feeling less than completely comfortable and found it difficult to talk freely and confidently to teachers. One major concern was that parent involvement was even less commonplace in secondary schools due in part to the subject-based curriculum with which parents may not have been competent.

The chairperson of the Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice asserted that too many parents were not closely involved in their children's education (Lamm, 1986). This task force formulated two key recommendations for schools that were interested in developing improved parent involvement programs:

1. encouraging and assisting school districts in developing more effective parent-involvement techniques; and
2. reminding parents that they improved their children's achievement by working closely with the schools.

Parents needed to be educated to realize that a child's education cannot solely be the responsibility of the school, and that children were prevented from reaching their full potential without cooperation between the home and the school. Parents were expected to become more involved in their children's education by working closely with the schools, emphasizing the importance of studying, and reducing the time spent watching television.

If school staff honestly wanted parents and citizens to be a part of the school experience, if they were willing to make the commitment in time and energy because they believed it was important, then children benefited (Henderson, Marburger & Ooms, 1986). Parents and other family members were the child's first and primary educators, and once children entered kindergarten, the responsibility must be shared with professional educators. Parent involvement was vital to a child's success in school. The barrier to more parent involvement was not parent apathy but lack of support from professional educators. Professionals needed to let parents into their "clubs", and parents needed to respect the educators' expertise. Confining parent involvement to bake sales and booster clubs was a waste of talent and energy for parents and educators alike.

Otterbourg (1986) found that partnerships helped to extend the learning opportunities for students, staff, administrators, parents, and community partners. Partnership leaders stated that their program impacts were greatest at the classroom level. Students learned that adults cared about and had positive expectations for them. Students

considered "at-risk" developed self-confidence as they experienced success in these programs. Although the impact of partnerships on parents was not measured, program leaders noted the wide communication gap between parents and students narrowed through mutual concern and support for shared educational responsibilities.

Coleman (1987) studied the changes in the relationship between family and society. A number of indicators implied a reduced incentive on the part of parents to take responsibility for their children within the domain of socialization. Coleman attributed this to the fact that parents had delegated an increasingly wide range of socialization activities to the school. Given the public policy assumption and the career development goals among adults, many families of all socioeconomic states failed to provide a home environment that allowed their children to benefit from schools as they existed.

Radwanski (1987) found the high school dropout rate in Ontario was between 31 and 33 %. Of this group, 12% emerged from the advanced stream, while 62% were registered in general level courses. Only those children who struggled with achievement were targeted by any appreciable communications between home and school (Cochran, 1987). The Ontario Ministry of Education (1988) found that parent involvement was a necessary component of a successful school attendance program and recommended communication of all policies, expectations, and procedures to the parent. More research was necessary to identify specific characteristics that may have contributed to the overrepresentation of students in the general level stream from the high school dropout population.

Teachers of older children involved parents much less (Ziegler, 1987). The children of parents who were aware of what their offspring were studying at school and

who were in regular contact with their teachers continued to show better academic achievement all the way through high school. Parent involvement in their children's education was equally powerful whether the involvement occurred at home or at school. Many parents were uneasy about contacting the school if they had concerns about their children's academic progress. The teachers who appreciated the value of parental involvement in increasing children's achievement were motivated to be proactive in involving parents, which helped to create effective partnerships between home and school.

Rich (1988) maintained that the only way to improve education was to combine the educational forces of home, school, and community. The public's interest in parents as educators transcended political lines and satisfied diverse constituencies. Teachers needed to be equipped with strategies aimed at home-learning activities that simultaneously reinforced practice in academic subjects, taught children useful daily life skills, and fit the time frames of working parents.

Parents needed to be more involved in their children's education (Haynes, Comer & Hamilton-Lee, 1988). The form this involvement took and the nature of its impact on school operations and outcomes remained a controversial issue. This research sample included 267 students in grades 3-5 who attended 11 low socioeconomic elementary schools, 85 teachers, and 50 parents. The findings of this study suggested three distinct levels of parent involvement:

1. attendance at activities structured for the general parent body;
2. involvement in the life of the school and individual classrooms through a stipend project; and

3. service on the planning and steering committee of each school.

The experimental group achieved improvement with respect to self-concept, behavior, attendance, and significantly in classroom reading scores. Meaningful, properly managed parent involvement exerted a positive impact on student self-esteem, behavior, and achievement.

The lack of effective and continuous two-way communication between teachers and parents resulted in serious communication misunderstandings (Baskwill, 1989). Parents needed to feel that the meetings they were asked to attend were tailored to their needs, and that the school was offering them something that they wanted. Parents also wanted to feel that they had a personal interest in what was being offered and that careful thought had gone into the planning. Teachers, administrators, and school districts needed to rekindle in parents the feeling that parents did have a place in the education of their children and their support and involvement was going to make a difference.

Parents possessed a profound influence on their children's school achievement, and may or may not have been aware of what they taught children about language use, morality, human interaction, and a score of other concepts and skills (Gasson & Baxter, 1989). Parents appeared to help every time they communicated with teachers by going to interviews, attending open house and back-to-school evenings, arranging home visits by the teacher, signing work folders, making phone calls, sending written notes, or writing comments on homework. Parent-teacher organizations tried to promote the interests of their local school by fostering such co-operation among all parties involved in education including the parents, the teachers, the students, and the community.

Morgan (1989) examined the political mandates for parent involvement in Britain. The findings indicated that the involvement of parents meant much more than visiting schools and consultations. Even though parent involvement was seen as more than just attending parent teacher interviews, the interest taken in a particular school by a particular parent was often restricted to the well-being of his or her own child or children. Of particular interest was the fact that attendance by parents at meetings to discuss the progress and well-being of their own children were better attended than meetings called for more general purposes.

D. Partnerships and Shared Responsibilities

Parents were more concerned about their children's welfare than about the operation and curriculum of the school (Heller & Lundquist, 1990). Based on the findings, Heller and Lundquist recommended that principals implement four strategies:

1. routinely be available to parents;
2. emphasize basic curriculum information;
3. clarify discipline procedures; and
4. improve upon the school's public relations programs.

These four criteria produced positive parental involvement, and when parents felt positive about the school, the school was a success. Parent support for a school and its programs were often a matter of perception and attitude. Public relations programs needed to be systematic, organized, evaluated periodically, and modified as required. An informed parent was most likely to become an involved parent.

Chilman (1990) studied the trends in poverty among families and the probable causes and outcomes of this poverty. The families who lived in poverty were

characterized as experiencing alienation, distrust, and fatalism. These attitudes contributed to behaviours such as early school leaving and delinquency. Children and youth of poor families were often victims of poor schools. Programs needed to be implemented to enhance education and job training.

Parent involvement in education and school was essential to the education and development of children (Prosise, 1990). Prosise suggested four factors that fostered teachers who were receptive of parent involvement:

1. teachers who were supported by administration;
2. teachers who were confident in their skills;
3. teachers who were flexible and yet had structured classrooms; and
4. parents who were genuinely interested in helping.

Some advantages to parent involvement were that student achievement was positively influenced by parent involvement, and parents began to realize the demands of teaching which developed a deeper appreciation for teachers. Direct and personal contact was the most effective method of communicating with parents.

Williams and Chavkin (1990) identified seven characteristics of successful parent involvement programs:

1. written policies;
2. administrative support;
3. training;
4. partnership approaches;
5. two-way communication;
6. networking; and

7. evaluation.

These seven characteristics provided a useful framework by which individual schools could have implemented new programs to increase parent involvement, while at the same time took into account that there was no perfect program. Delgado-Gaitan (1991a) indicated the importance of a school's investment in a complete parent education program, from preschool to high school, that also allowed teachers release time to meet with parents when it was convenient for both.

Swap-McAllister (1990) identified three different philosophies that shaped parent involvement programs. As long as educators avoided thinking of parents as deficient, any of these philosophies for parent involvement promised to increase student achievement:

1. school to home transmission;
2. interactive learning; and
3. partnership for school success.

The partnership for school success philosophy appeared to be the most effective in increasing student achievement. Attitudinal and political shifts toward mutual respect and shared power were prerequisites to such true partnerships. The emphasis was placed on two-way communication, focusing on parental strengths, and problem-solving with parents. Limited evidence suggested that this partnership philosophy was the most effective in increasing student achievement when compared to other philosophies. It was possible to increase significantly student achievement through restructuring educational practices in relation to parent partnerships.

Schools and families had inadequately promoted the academic and social success of some children (Davies, 1991). Davies examined three different school projects:

Accelerated Schools Model, Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, and Home and School Institute. All these programs favoured three common themes among them: providing success for children, serving the whole child, and sharing responsibility. Leadership was essential to any school staff who chose the partnership approach to school reform.

Whenever human beings tried to communicate with one another, natural barriers existed and a school that tried to communicate with parents was no exception (D'Angelo & Adler, 1991). It was not possible to design a single method of communication that always reached all parents. Communication strategies for individual schools needed to be adapted to meet the needs of families and reach the intended audience. Parent meetings and workshops were most successful when they included food, family, and fun. Teachers who practiced "good news" communication with parents established a tone of shared celebration between home and school.

The Illinois State Board of Education established a major program objective for 1987 through 1991 and created the Urban Education Partnership Grants (Chapman, 1991). Chapman maintained that partnerships needed to be established to involve schools, families, businesses, and social service agencies. The tasks assigned to schools and the public's expectations for them therefore changed dramatically. The connections between schools, families, and other community groups had previously been few in number and inconsistent in quality. Under this program objective, many partnerships promoted home/school interaction and enabled principals and teachers to make better use of external resources.

The assumptions that students, teachers, and parents held about the outcomes of schooling were culturally and socially determined (Bauch, 1988; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991b). When parents showed interest in their children's learning, student academic performance usually increased. The responsibility rested with both the family and the school to create and maintain an effective working relationship. Parents needed to work collectively with each other and the school to learn the meaning of parent involvement, and schools also needed to learn about the families they served.

Epstein (1991) reported the effects of teachers' practices in relation to parent involvement on student achievement. The findings supported previous studies which suggested that teachers' strong implementation of parent involvement and parents' responsive involvement with their children at home on schoolwork should increase student achievement, even in families with little formal education. Keith (1991) found that parent involvement was a consistent and important influence on high school seniors' grades, but seemed to have no meaningful effect on seniors' achievement test scores. Children learned that education was important from both parents and teachers when schools and families developed a strong partnership (Alkin, 1992; Botrie & Wenger, 1992). Alkin maintained that children came to believe that the people from both environments had invested and coordinated the time along with the resources to help them to succeed.

Educational initiatives that involved parents needed to be perceived by them to be opportunities for them to learn, to grow, to explore possibilities, to become familiar with organizations such as schools and local education authorities, and where necessary, to challenge the existing structures and traditions (Wolfendale, 1992). Wolfendale

suggested that parents wanted to do what was in the best interest of their children. More importantly, parents were considered the primary educators of their children and were the experts on their children. Notwithstanding the importance of parent involvement, many teachers were weary of parents' intrusion into their domain and were suspicious of parents' intentions. Even when the opportunity was provided, parents were not always receptive to invitations to come into school or to participate in school-home learning projects.

Crowson (1992) asserted that both parents and school authorities were teachers, and they were considered to be more effective as active partners in instruction rather than as independent and often antagonistic forces. The school principal's role was a key to successful parent-school partnerships through organized, responsive, open, participative, and active relationships with parents. The emerging paradigm of school-community relations suggested that a more responsive approach to parents promoted an open school environment and thereby encouraged representational parental involvement, as well as a transition toward an active partnership in learning.

The research findings of Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) indicated that students whose parents were more involved in their education earned higher grades in school, all other factors being equal. This longitudinal study suggested that parent involvement accounted for better school performance and stronger school engagement of adolescents. The manner in which parents had expressed their involvement and encouragement may have been as important as to what extent they communicated their commitment.

Muller and Kerbow (1993) examined a complex set of influences that affected parent involvement and its influence on student academic outcomes. It was suggested that parent involvement was shaped by three factors:

1. the resources and opportunities available to the parents;
2. the relationship between the parent and the child; and
3. the interests of parents in the education of the child.

Families had a defined set of resources including time, money, the number of parents in the household, and parents' education levels. The actions of parents involved with their children's education seemed to come about from a combination of parent interests and family resources.

An explanation for how and why background variables were related to school achievement were necessary when investigating the effect of family structure (Lee, 1993). Two types of family structure were identified: traditional which included two parents and non-traditional which included a single parent, melded family, or other relatives or guardians. The average student in a traditional family scored well above the average student in any non-traditional family on standardized test scores, grades, and behaviour.

The most powerful societal force that affected student motivation was broadly labeled as the "changing family structure" (Cohn & Kottkamp, 1993). Ninety percent of the teachers interviewed maintained that students and their parents had changed and that the changes were negative. Most of the teachers gave parents a failing grade in school support, and blamed parents as a collective for the general decrease in student motivation. Teachers reported some parents would cover up or make excuses for students, lie for

them, or try to get them out of work. The number of students failing to meet teacher expectations had increased while the problems of contacting parents and getting them to help had increased even more.

Rioux and Berla (1993) asserted that the parent or guardian who took the position that the high school student needed them less and that they were on their own made a costly mistake. The We Can-Parent Involvement Program at a high school in Denver set out specific requirements the parents were expected to fulfill. Each parent was expected to attend an orientation meeting with their child before school began, to go to the school one full day during the year in order to attend all the classes of their child, and to participate in one parenting workshop during the year. Over a five-year period, only one employer complained of allowing paid release time for their employee to attend the one full day at the school. Between one-third and one-half of the parents attended the orientation session, visited the school, and attended the parent workshop as required.

Parental involvement affected overall and specific academic achievement of American eighth graders (Keith & Keith, 1993). The data was derived from the first wave of the NELS:88 study and included information from 21,835 students and their parents. Parental educational aspirations appeared to be the most important and most influential component of student achievement. The students' perceptions of parental involvement were considered more important than the parents' reports of involvement. The actual parental involvement affected achievement only through the students' perceptions of that involvement. The research indicated that parents who were involved needed to make sure that their children understood that involvement.

O'Callaghan (1993) identified three key variables in family-school discussions:

1. the locus of assessment intervention;
2. responsibility for the resolution of family-school problems; and
3. accomplishment of problem resolution.

O'Callaghan maintained that the teacher-parent-child relationship was the fundamental unit of interaction in the school-based ecosystems collaboration model. The success of school-based collaboration with families in an effort to increase parent involvement appeared to rest on the courage, caring, and wisdom of school leadership.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) examined the process of preparing students in teacher training programs to work with parents (Hannon & Welch, 1993). The research focused on four areas about parents' views: children's attitudes to school, learning at home and in school, home-school communication, and parent involvement. The teachers in training conducted interviews with parents and found that the parents enjoyed the experience and stated that they would welcome the opportunity to express their views again in the future. This also prepared students in teacher education programs for work with parents, as they became more aware of the home-school issue.

A random sample of parents at four schools studied the nature of the relationship between public choice and parents' satisfaction with their children's school (Goldring & Shapira, 1993). The research findings indicated that parents perceived a low to moderate level of empowerment. They did not sense that they had opportunities to be full partners in decision-making processes. Parents who reported that they were involved in school activities were also more satisfied. The effect of parent involvement was stronger than any of the other variables measured suggesting that reform through parental choice must be accompanied by changes in the internal functioning of schools. Parents who exercised

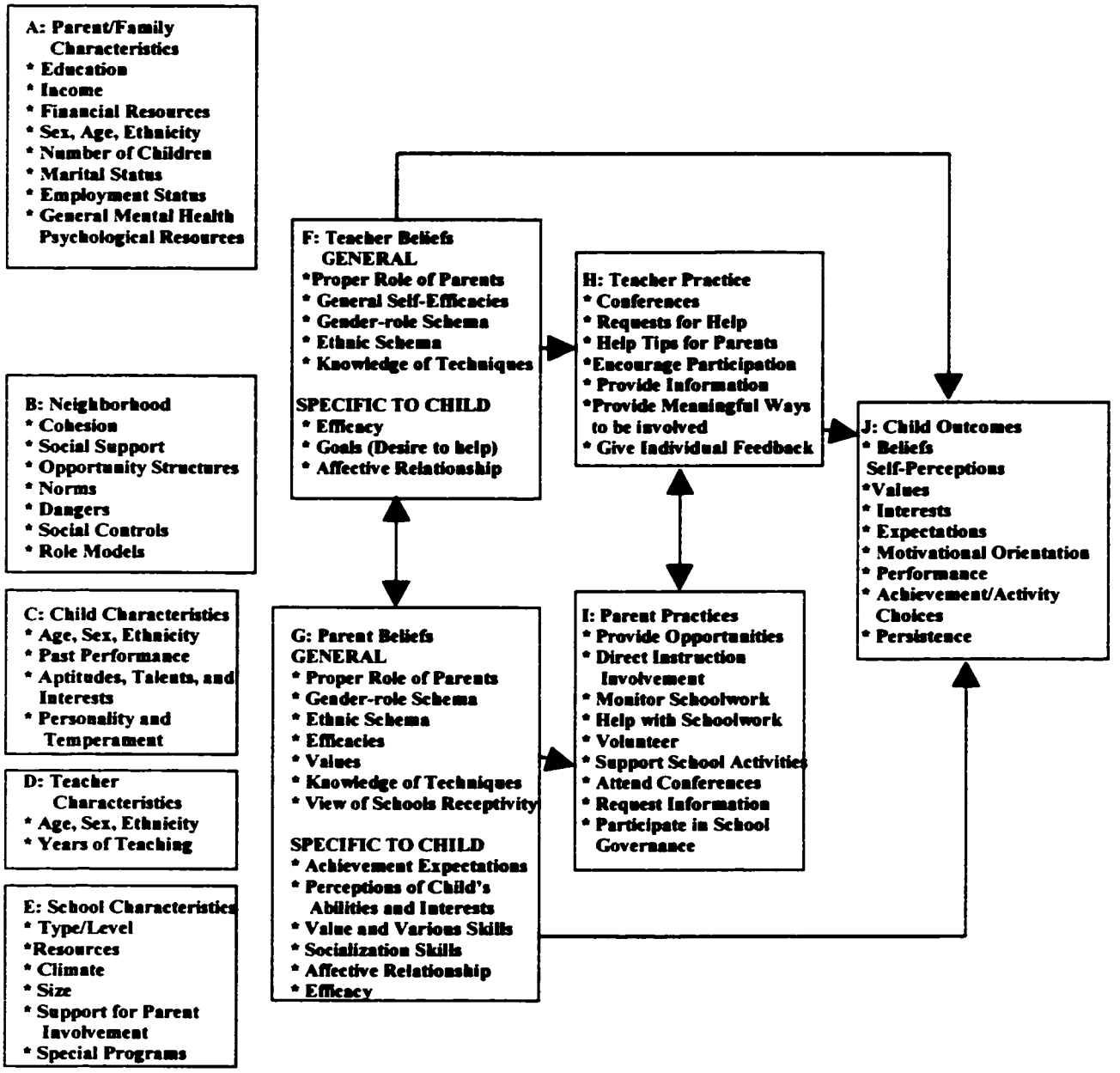
choice had high expectations of their schools and expected to be part of the decision-making forums that allowed for the redefinition of traditional responsibilities and authority.

Teachers exerted a major positive impact on home-school connections, particularly when they worked in concert with the adolescents' parents and other community organizations. Eccles and Harold (1993) developed a model that provided a framework for thinking about the dynamic processes related to parents' involvement in their children's education (see Figure B). All efforts to keep parents informed had enhanced family connections to the school in the middle years. Parent involvement during the early adolescent years was important given the various influences and barriers to partnerships. The collaborative relationship between parents and schools seemed to decrease rather than increase as children moved into their adolescent years and into secondary schools. In order to maintain the positive home-school connections, every effort needed to be directed to reversing this downward trend. There was every reason to believe that parent involvement was just as important, perhaps even more important, during the secondary school years.

Chavkin (1993) compiled and examined research articles about minority children and the relationship of their families and schools. Chavkin asserted that the educational system was less successful in educating the growing minority population than it was with the majority population in the United States. Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans were more likely to be undereducated than whites. The positive relationship between parent involvement and student achievement indicated a specific need for more

FIGURE B

MODEL OF INFLUENCES ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND CHILD OUTCOMES



Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1993). Parent-school involvement during the early adolescent years. Teachers College Record, 94, 568-587.

minority-parent involvement. Educators needed to find ways to increase the involvement of minority parents in the education of their children from preschool through college. Parent involvement was essential, but it first required efforts on the part of educators to develop a clear understanding about minority parents and their relationship to schools as well as specific plans to promote their inclusion.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) hypothesized that parent involvement correlated most strongly with school performance by means of parental interest in children's inner resources. The results supported a multidimensional model and generally indicated the usefulness of distinguishing among multiple components of parent involvement. They found one marginally significant direct association specifically for mothers between behaviour (which also showed indirect effects) and school performance. This was consistent with the fact that studies which defined parent involvement as a mother's level of activity with the school had consistently uncovered more positive findings than those focused on other aspects of involvement.

New initiatives designed to improve outcomes for children and families assisted clients to assume control of their lives (Kenny, Strand, Hagerup & Bruner, 1994). People were better able to implement and maintain change when they had been involved in assessing the need for it, prioritized issues to be addressed, and designed and developed plans for accompanying that change. Client motivation was the key to change. Control and choice in decision making were two other important elements of enhancing motivation.

The complexity of the family-school literature with its wide range of constructs, variables, and measures had made it extremely difficult to draw strong conclusions from

published records. Ryan and Adams (1995) constructed a family-school relationships model to assist researchers and practitioners in the design of their research and interventions. This model organized previous research studies on seven levels:

1. level 0: child outcomes of academic achievement and social behaviours in the classroom;
2. level 1: child's personal characteristics;
3. level 2: school-focused parent-child interactions;
4. level 3: general parent-child interactions;
5. level 4: general family relations;
6. level 5: personal characteristics of parents; and
7. level 6: exogenous social, cultural, and biological variables.

This model seemed to capture adequately the connection between family relationship variables and a child's success in school.

Despite lengthly rhetoric about parents as partners in education, schools rarely treated parents as even junior associates, clients, or customers (Kropp & Hodson, 1995). Schools failed to train teachers to do the necessary outreach that would connect the schools to parents, businesses, and the larger community. Schools and teachers were wonderful public resources not often used by disadvantaged portions of the population, whose past experience in school may not have been a positive one. More parents needed to become involved, not just as volunteers, but in decision-making or powerful advisory roles.

Practices of partnerships had declined dramatically from the elementary to secondary grades, even though families may have needed more information and guidance

from the schools in order to monitor early adolescents (Epstein & Lee, 1995). This decline in parent involvement came at a time when the school organization was more complex and the life-course decisions required of students substantially influenced them and their families. Students, parents, and principals in this study agreed that most families were poorly informed and weakly involved in their children's education during the secondary school years.

Moles (1993) examined the data obtained from a sample of eighth graders and their parents in the first year of the NELS:88 longitudinal study. Contact between home and school occurred for many purposes. The percentage of parents contacted by or contacting the school was distributed among six categories:

1. student's academic performance (54%, 51%);
2. student's academic program for the year (34%, 34%);
3. student's course selection for high school (40%);
4. placement decision regarding student's high school program (29%);
5. participation in school fund raising activities (36%, 17%); and
6. volunteer work such as supervising lunch or chaperoning field trips (24%, 15%).

These findings indicated that schools needed to reach out to more parents. Schools tended to contact more working mothers than other parental figures about high school course selection and only reached them marginally more often about their child's academic performance. These most common contacts with working mothers challenged the belief that working precluded mothers from being involved with their children's education.

Schneider and Coleman (1993) also conducted an analysis of the NELS:88 (Ingels, Thalji, Pulliam, Bartot & Frankel, 1994) data and concluded that one of the most important factors in a child's success in school was the degree to which the parents were actively involved in the child's education. Not all parents had the same resources or opportunities to act on their educational expectations for their children. Parent involvement was also affected by the opportunities made available by the school. Community characteristics, such as informal networks among parents, were another source for increasing parent involvement. Parent involvement was shaped by the parents' orientation toward education, their financial and social resources, and the opportunities that were available in the schools and communities in which they lived. The growth of school districts and the growing professionalization of the teacher appeared to have distanced schools from the families and communities they once served. The distance between families and schools was further exacerbated by television, another potent force in the lives of children. The world of television offered children a distinct set of values, often contradictory to those of the school and the family.

With regard to education systems generally and parent-teacher relations in particular, diversity of practice seemed to predominate over consensus (Macbeth, 1993). A common feature of European systems stipulated that parents were legally responsible for their child's education. There was a growing recognition of the value of parent-teacher partnerships in educating children, but the time consuming nature of establishing educational partnerships with parents was at odds with teachers' conditions of service. There was also a variation in the extent to which school councils controlled, advised, or checked upon the school or merely exchanged information. When the emphasis in the

1980's was placed on the management of schools, representatives of 40 national parents' associations established the European Parents' Association (EPA) in 1983. The EPA wanted a greater part in policy development, in the training of parents, in improving information for parents, and in stimulating research about parents in education.

A sample of 711 teachers in Genevan primary schools provided the data by which Montandon (1993) proposed both a typology for parent and teacher attitudes and an interesting instrument for composing, understanding, and eventually helping to reduce their differences. The study revealed that the majority of teachers tended to think that the majority of parents were not genuinely interested in how the school worked, and that the few who were seemed aggressive and overwhelming. Far too many teachers saw themselves as specialists whose knowledge was to be accepted by parents, without question. Parents indicated that they would have agreed to additional contacts, or would have manifested interest in their children's activities at school, the things they learned, their schoolmates, teachers, and school life in general. This typology of parent and teacher attitudes concerning family-school relations addressed the division of labour between schools and families and parent involvement in their children's schooling. The great majority of parents felt ready to participate in their children's homework and 53% were ready to participate in the school's management. Many of the problems between parents and teachers had their origin in misunderstandings, stereotypes, and a lack of genuine communication. A dialogue was necessary at the local school level if misunderstandings were to be dissipated and a real partnership implemented.

Through means of a theoretical model that depicted the overlapping spheres of influence on children's learning and development and its resulting data (see Figure C), Epstein (1994) identified six types of parent involvement activities that formed a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships:

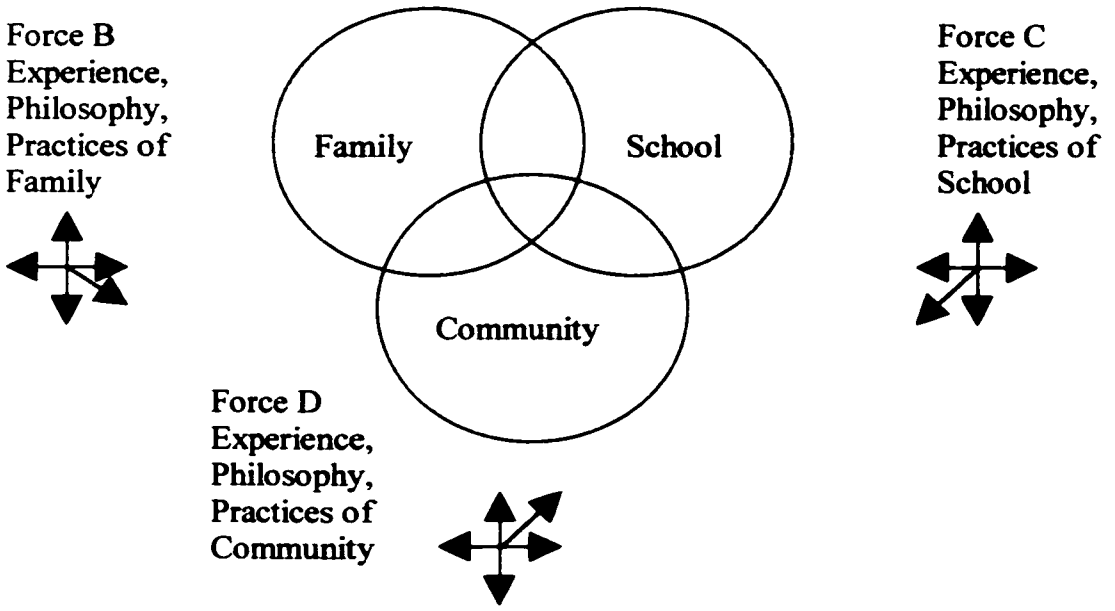
1. the basic obligations of families;
2. the basic obligations of schools;
3. the involvement at the school building;
4. family involvement in learning activities at home;
5. decision making, participation, leadership, and school advocacy; and
6. collaborations and exchanges with the community.

The research findings indicated that parents became who previously had not been involved became involved, and they immediately increased their regard and support for teachers. In addition, teachers had changed their attitudes about parents as they increased their communications and interactions with parents. The success of implementing these six types of involvement required educators to write a policy of school and family partnerships that explicitly included reference to goals for all six types.

Scott-Jones (1995) developed a four-level framework that addressed valuing, monitoring, helping, and doing which was used to organize the existing research on parental interactions and children's school achievement (see Figure D). This framework acknowledged that parents contributed in different ways to their children's school achievement. Parental interactions often were operationalized as maternal in character. Because most studies had not included fathers, it was found that more attention needed to be given to the role of fathers in their children's education and schooling. Jones

FIGURE C

EPSTEIN'S EXTERNAL MODEL

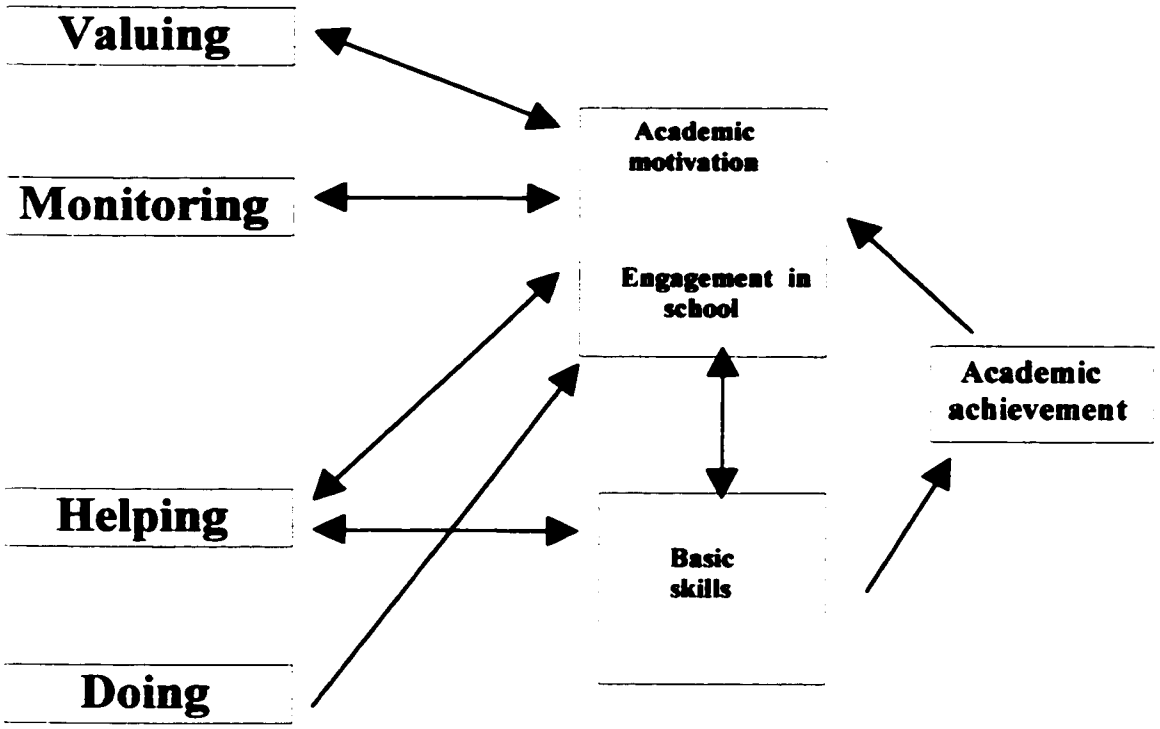


Overlapping Spheres of Influence of Family, School, and Community on Children's Learning

Epstein, J.L. (1994). Theory to practice: School and family partnerships lead to school improvement and student success. In C. Fagnano, & B. Werber (Eds.), School, family and community interaction: A view from the firing lines (pp. 39-52). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

FIGURE D

SCOTT-JONES' FOUR LEVEL FRAMEWORK



Family Interactions and Children's Academic Achievement

Scott-Jones, D. (1995) Parent-child interactions and school achievement. In B. Ryan, G. Adams, T. Gullotta, R. Weissberg, & R. Hampton (Eds.), The family school connection (pp.75-107). London: Sage Publication

maintained that practices could have been established to encourage positive family interactions that lead to high achievement in school.

Storer (1995) examined the role of educator's beliefs about parents and parent involvement as potential barriers to that involvement. The data collected from Iowa teachers and administrators indicated three key attitudes about parents:

1. many parents were perceived as disinterested, unable, or unwilling to be involved in their children's education;
2. many parents had unrealistic expectations of the school's role in "parenting" the child; and
3. the "door was open" and responsible parents found ways to be involved.

Teachers also believed that parents were not appreciative of teachers' workloads and working conditions. The beliefs that educators held about parents and parent involvement were directly related to efforts that facilitated parent involvement. Educators felt they were unable to have an impact on students whose home environments were not supportive.

Adolescents with high parental support were better adjusted and less distressed than those with low parent support (Holahan, Valentiner & Moos, 1995). Parental conflict related to adolescents' psychological adjustment essentially as strongly as did direct maternal and paternal support. An integrative structural equation model showed that parental support was associated with better psychological adjustment both directly and indirectly through a higher percent of approach coping strategies. Familial experiences appeared to operate partly indirectly in influencing adaptive functioning during late adolescence.

Public education had generally been the domain of centralized bureaucracies that had little room for non-professional participation in shaping education policy and practice. O'Donoghue and O'Brien (1995) maintained that with the onset of the 1970's and the arguments presented for more parent involvement, the trend at that time recognized that the political role of school-based parent groups, that school councils, and that parent organizations had championed the concept of parent participation as a democratic right.

The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school was not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family was able to participate in three important aspects of the learning process:

1. creating a home environment that encouraged learning;
2. expressing high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and
3. becoming involved in their children's education at school and in the community (Henderson & Berla, 1995).

When parents were involved in their children's education at home, their children did better in school. When parents were involved at school, their children went farther in school, and the schools they attended became more effective learning environments. Reaching out to families and helping them become more engaged in their children's education at home and school exerted a powerful impact on student achievement. Henderson and Berla suggested that effective parent involvement efforts must be comprehensive, well planned, and long lasting. Collaboration with families was an essential component of reform strategy.

The "School of the Future Project" indicated that teachers were the most stable members, especially those who had taught in the same school for long periods (Arvey & Tijerina, 1995). Teachers emerged as critical to the success or failure of any school-based initiative, while parent involvement proved to be the most challenging aspect of this project. The research indicated that parents had no idea of what was expected, and fathers in particular viewed the school as the territory of the mother. An increase in parent involvement at the schools and some parent leadership was evident. The school staff also noted positive changes in parents' self-esteem as evidenced by their increased participation and presence at school functions.

Bauch and Goldring (1995) studied three different school choice alternatives in relation to the roles of schools in developing parent involvement. The three types included Catholic, single-focus magnet, and multi-focus magnet schools. The findings suggested that Catholic schools appeared to facilitate greater parent involvement at school and elicited more parent involvement at home. Parents at Catholic schools were more actively involved at home with their children in enforcing rules that contributed toward the completion of homework. They also felt that home-school communication was effective in that the school responded quickly, and made them feel welcome and at ease when they needed to contact the school about a problem.

A descriptive analysis of 13 urban high schools found a varying relationship between parent and teacher empowerment for three types of schools (Bauch & Goldring, 1996). The survey data considered the two variables of parent involvement and teacher decision-making at Catholic, single-focus, and multi-focus schools. Catholic schools appeared to be developing a partnership mode of parent-teacher relations more so than

the single-focus or multi-focus public schools. The data suggested that in establishing new forms of public choice such as magnet and charter schools, educators needed to develop an openness and responsiveness to parents, as was found traditionally in Catholic schools.

Griffith (1996) examined 42 elementary schools to explore the relationship between parent involvement and empowerment to student academic performance. The measures of these variables suggested reliable predictive power regarding student achievement. Parent involvement was consistently correlated with student test performance.

A study of 116 kindergarten-aged children and their parents examined the relations between parental expressions of affection with parental control behaviours and children's classroom acceptance (Isley, O'Neil & Parke, 1996). The findings demonstrated that mothers and fathers each made unique or independent contributions to children's social acceptance. A lack of social competence and/or rejection by peers was linked to learning disabilities, academic failure, and school dropout. Isley et al. stressed the importance of continual examination of family-peer and family-school relations, especially with respect to the ways in which children's experiences in the family and school environments mutually influenced children's social-emotional development.

Melby and Conger (1996) studied the relationship of two types of parental behaviors to adolescent academic behavior. Families were recruited through local school systems constituted a sample of 347 seventh graders and their parents. The findings indicated that parenting practices actually fostered change in academic accomplishment over time. The home environment and parents who positively reinforced appropriate

behavioral standards increased academic performance. In addition, parent educational level was related to involvement and to academic performance.

The perception among educational researchers was that successful schools established practices that fostered greater communication with parents, encouraged parents to assist children with homework and planning, and recruited parents to work as volunteers or participate in school governance (Sui-Chu, 1996). The findings indicated that these schools were uncommon. It was impossible to identify, reliably, schools that were effective or ineffective in developing higher levels of parent involvement. The variable of involvement at home suggested the strongest relationship to academic achievement. The research findings provided little evidence for the conjecture that parents with high socio-economic status (SES) and two-parent families were more involved in their children's education. Children scored significantly higher in both mathematics and reading if they attended a high SES school, irrespective of their own family background.

Forty-nine schools in Baltimore worked to establish comprehensive, permanent programs of partnership with their families and communities (Sanders, 1996). The schools attributed their success in making stronger connections with their families and communities to the work of their Action Teams, the School - Family - Community Partnerships Program, the Framework of Six Types of Parent Involvement (FSTPI) developed by Epstein, and the assistance of full-time facilitators from the Fund for Educational Excellence who visited and supported the school's Action Team. The site visits to these schools yielded a number of important insights about how Action Teams using the FSTPI helped to develop and maintain strong connections with their students'

families and communities. Nine insights proved useful in establishing effective, comprehensive, and permanent programs of school-family-community partnerships:

1. school-family-community partnerships were a shared responsibility;
2. institutionalization of school-family-community partnerships took time;
3. school-family-community partnerships improved in incremental steps and with planning;
4. school-family-community partnerships were important throughout the grades;
5. school-family-community partnerships needed to include students;
6. school-family-community partnerships included the community;
7. school-family-community partnerships helped schools reach the hard to reach;
8. school-family-community partnerships must be linked to the curricula and student learning; and
9. school-family-community partnerships that were the most effective met the challenges of the six types of involvement.

The work in Baltimore showed that every school could develop programs of partnership that enabled schools, families, and communities to better care for and educate students.

The three main topics of school and family connections in the 1970's included beliefs and opinions about the importance of parent involvement, barriers to home-school relations, and a few examples of school practices (Bosco, 1982). Researchers struggled with the definitions of parent involvement and the terms for the roles and relations of teachers. Reform in the 1980's was predicated on a positive course toward school and family connections. Alkin (1992) maintained that the focus of research and practice in the

1990's had shifted to partnerships and shared responsibilities between parents and the teaching profession.

The past decade has been fraught with demands for the restructuring of education in Ontario, and has been focused on increased parent involvement through school-based management (Minister of Education, 1994). This restructuring attempted to shift the power from a central government office to that of local school councils, otherwise known as Parent Advisory Councils. Skau (1996) maintained that schools needed to attract a group of parents that represented the broad spectrum of community values and interests. Schools also needed to keep parents involved and to restructure the parent-school relationship in ways that made parents feel comfortable so they would become involved in significant ways.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A. Subjects

Population and Sample

This study employed a convenience sample selection of all general level English classes and all advanced level English classes registered in grade 10 at one urban, southwestern Ontario, Roman Catholic secondary school. The school offered two general and seven advanced level grade 10 English classes. These English classes were scheduled in accordance with contractual class sizes that which were quite different for general and advanced level classes.

The maximum number registered in an advanced level class was 34 students; whereas, the maximum number of students registered in a general level class was 28 students. The lower class size for students at the general level took into account the behaviour problems that generally were considered to be related to students in this stream.

This study involved the potential to include 245 high school students; 48 were derived from the general level classes and 197 were derived from the advanced level classes. One hundred eighty-four questionnaires were returned, of which 155 were from the advanced group and 29 from the general group (see Table 1).

Table 1

Students Selected for the Sample

Academic Level	Number of Students Registered	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Advanced (7 classes)	197	155	78.6
General (2 classes)	48	29	58.3
Sample Total	245	184	74.6

B. Instrumentation

To measure parent involvement, the parent questionnaire (see Appendix A) from the second follow-up parent component of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) was reduced to include only items that measured parent involvement. Moreover, variables that were gathered from the student record card in June of 1999: student attendance, number of referrals to the discipline office, and final grades from the English class.

The questions of the parent questionnaire focused on family background and on the character of the home educational support system. For the purposes of this study, questions 1, 2, 7, 14, 16, 17, 19, and 20 were selected for analysis because they most directly measured the extent of parent involvement. This self-administered parent survey instructed the parent or guardian who had the most knowledge about the teenager's current living situation and educational plans to complete the questionnaire. Question 1 and 2 focused on characteristics of family background.

Parent involvement was operationally defined as the degree of knowledge the parent had about the teenager's school life (questions 7 and 14) and parent contact with the teenager's school (questions 16 and 17). Questions 19 and 20 specifically investigated family rules and how often parents spoke with their teens about particular topics.

A student behaviour problem was operationalized as the number of times that a student was suspended from school, expelled from school, or referred to the discipline office. Achievement was operationalized by the student's final English grade.

C. Design and Procedures

The research design of this study attempted to determine the relationship of parent involvement of advanced and general level students with respect to their achievement. The ordinal data gathered from the parent questionnaire was investigated by using non-parametric testing methods.

Prior to beginning this study, a letter requesting permission to conduct this research and a copy of this proposal was submitted to the Faculty of Education. Upon approval (see Appendix B), the aforementioned study was submitted to and approval was received from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee (see Appendix C). Subsequently, a letter was forwarded to the Director of Education (see Appendix D) requesting permission to proceed with the study. Once permission was received at the school board level, a letter was issued to the selected school principal to set up a meeting to discuss the objectives and procedures.

All grade 10 general level and advanced level English classes were selected to create two separate groups for inclusion in this research. The English classes were selected because this was a Ministry of Education required course and eliminated the possibility of any student being registered in more than one of the scheduled English classes.

These classes were scheduled in either first or second semester in accordance with high school's scheduling practices. Each student within the selected classes was identified and assigned a personal identification number (PIN) to preserve each person's anonymity. This PIN was also assigned to the parent/guardian of each student for later matching purposes. Following the class selection and student identification, a letter was

issued to all parents/guardians (see Appendix E) to explain the purposes of this research, how they and their children were identified, as well as the parameters of their participation.

Students received the surveys from their classroom teachers and were requested to deliver the surveys to their parents. The choice of a "passive" consent was permitted by requesting parents to call or write the school if they did not wish to receive the questionnaire or have their child's records subject to this research. This method allowed all of the 245 subjects to receive and answer the questionnaire unless the parents contacted the school in advance. The return of the completed survey instrument constituted an "active" consent from the parent. The data was then collected for each student whose parent returned the questionnaire. The objective of this consent procedure was to reduce sampling biases resulting from an over-representation of well-functioning teenagers and their families. Fewer than 1% of the parents were expected to decline the questionnaire or withhold their child's school records from this study (Steinberg et al., 1992). Although no parents included in this study declined receiving the questionnaire, 21.4% of the advanced level group and 41.7% of the general level group did not return a completed survey.

To gather information, each student record card in the discipline office was coded with the student's PIN, and the data was collected in June of 1999. The English teachers of these students were notified (see Appendix F) of the required reporting of final grades by means of the student PIN in either February or June of 1999, depending on which semester these students were registered in the classes subject to this research.

In March of 1999, all parents received the parent questionnaire by way of student delivery. They were instructed to have the person who best knew the child to complete the questionnaire and have the student return it to the school in the envelope provided in their package, thereby constituting an "active" consent. These questionnaires were coded with the student PIN for later matching purposes. The researcher, upon receiving the completed surveys, conducted the scoring of the questionnaire.

In June of 1999, the information was collected from the student record card in relation to student grades, student discipline office referrals, and absenteeism. Once all the data were collected, all materials pertaining to personal identification numbers were removed and destroyed.

D. Limitations of the Design

The data analysis determined the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement at only one high school, which weakened the generalizability to the population. The selected school serviced a somewhat affluent group of students and families and the results may have been quite different if the research was conducted at schools servicing students and families from a lower socioeconomic environment. The obtained results need to be replicated at a broad spectrum of schools before inferences could be generalized to all high school students.

Another limitation exists in the fact that teachers were not included. A lack of detailed information about their attitudes and practices of involving families in their children's education in the high school system is not available. The recent "political protest" by Ontario teachers in October of 1997, followed by teachers striking in

September of 1998 also may have impacted parents' attitudes regarding teachers, their commitment to student achievement, and the educational system.

Many questions will remain unanswered. Is it possible for a child in a poorly functioning family to achieve academic success if the parents were not able to be supportive, encouraging, and helpful with school responsibilities? Is the intellectual ability of the child in this situation impacted by having parents too overly burdened with personal problems to focus on their child's school activities?

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

A. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the SPSS 7.5 statistical program for personal computers. In general, non-parametric tests were used for data analysis:

1. Likelihood Ratio chi square or Fisher's Exact Test chi square for 2x2 tables that measured the association between two variables;
2. Mann Whitney Test that measured the differences between groups for non-parametric data; and
3. Spearman's rho Correlation that measured the correlation between two data measured at least on an ordinal scale.

These tests were applied in accordance with the parameters of the research question and hypotheses. For descriptive purposes, where appropriate, arithmatic means and standard deviations were reported. A significance level of $p<0.05$ was selected for this study however, significance levels of $p<0.01$ were also reported. The findings of this study have been organized in two sections:

1. results related to differences between the advanced and the general level groups with regard to the parent questionnaire; and
2. student record variables and relationships to "parent questionnaire".

B. Differences Between Advanced and General Level Groups (Parent Questionnaire)

Relationship of Survey Respondent to Subject

The first section of the survey examined the family background of each subject. The relationship between the survey respondent and the subject are reported in Table 2. For

Table 2

Relationship of Survey Respondent to Student

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Relationship	Father	25	6	31
		16.1%	21.4%	16.9%
	Mother	123	18	141
		79.4%	64.3%	77.0%
	Other	7	4	11
		4.5%	14.3%	6.0%
Total		155	28	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	4.024	2	.134
N of Valid Cases	183		

reporting purposes, nine definitive categories were combined to create the category labeled as "Other" (see Appendix A). The "Other" group included the categories of stepmother, stepfather, grandmother, grandfather, other female relative, other male relative, foster mother/guardian, and foster father/guardian. There was no significant difference between the groups in relation to the family background and the person who completed the survey based on the Likelihood Ratio of .134. The predominant respondent for the advanced and the general level groups was the mother with an overall rate of 77%.

Family Status

Question 2 examined the family status of each subject in relation the number of adults present in the home (see Table 3). The categories provided in the survey were combined on the basis of whether there were either one or two adults present in the home. Homes with one adult included the three distinct categories of those who were both single and never married, those who were divorced or separated, or those who were widowed. Homes with two adults present included those who were either married or those who were living in a common-law relationship. No significant difference between the advanced and general level groups were found ($p = .199$). The majority of students (80.5%) of the combined group were living with two adults present in the home.

Teenager's School Life

The second part of the questionnaire examined parents' knowledge in relation to their teenagers' school life. Question seven dealt with three aspects of teenagers' school life in relation to whether the teenagers had ever been "considered to have a behavioral

Table 3

Family Status

Status * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Status	1 Adult	28	8	36
		17.8%	28.6%	19.5%
	2 Adults	129	20	149
		82.2%	71.4%	80.5%
Total		157	28	185
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.199
N of Valid Cases	185	

problem at school", were "suspended from school", or were "expelled from school". There were no significant differences between the groups with regard to being considered a "problem at school" ($p = .200$, see Table 4) or being "expelled from school" ($p = .150$, see Table 5). The majority of parents (93.9%) reported that their teens had never been considered a behavioral problem at school.

A statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) difference arose between students at the advanced and the general level with regard to being "suspended from school" ($p = .033$, see Table 6). The results showed that 22.2% of the students at the general level had been suspended from school in comparison to 7.8% of the students at the advanced level. Thus, students at the general level were more likely to be suspended than were students at the advanced level. The common practice of educational administrators was to suspend students prior to any consideration of expulsion. This was supported by the fact that only one student from the overall group had been expelled from school and that 99.4% of all parents had indicated that their teens had never been expelled from school.

Parents' Feelings about the High School

Question 14 addressed 21 aspects in relation to how parents felt about the high school their teenagers attended. The survey question examined how strongly parents either agreed or disagreed with each of the 21 aspects (see Tables 7 and 8). There were no significant differences between the advanced and general level groups, with the exception of the aspect "school provides a range of programs for students with different needs" ($p = .009$, see Table 8).

Table 7 indicated that parents **somewhat agreed** with nine aspects: "priority on learning", "homework assigned is worthwhile", "realistic academic standards", "students

Table 4

Considered a Behaviour Problem at School

PROBLEM * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
PROBLEM	Yes	8	3	11
		5.2%	11.5%	6.1%
	No	146	23	169
		94.8%	88.5%	93.9%
Total		154	26	180
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.200
N of Valid Cases	180	

Table 5

Student Expelled from School

EXPELL * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Expelled	Yes		1	1
			3.7%	.6%
	No	153	26	179
		100.0%	96.3%	99.4%
Total		153	27	180
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.150
N of Valid Cases	180	

Table 6

Students Suspended from School

SUSPEND * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Suspended	Yes	12	6	18
		7.8%	22.2%	9.9%
	No	142	21	163
		92.2%	77.8%	90.1%
Total		154	27	181
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.033
N of Valid Cases	181	

Table 7

Group Effect on Parents' Feelings about the High School

Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Priority on Learning	General	27	2.0000	.8771
	Advanced	147	1.8912	.7132
Homework Assigned is Worthwhile	General	25	2.2800	1.0614
	Advanced	146	2.0890	.9316
Too Much Homework	General	27	4.4074	1.0473
	Advanced	147	4.4626	1.0154
Too Little Homework	General	28	3.9643	1.3467
	Advanced	139	3.8489	1.3983
Realistic Academic Standards	General	28	2.3571	1.0616
	Advanced	146	2.1233	.8127
Academic Standards Set Too Low	General	25	4.4800	1.1590
	Advanced	140	4.6571	1.0713
Students are Adequately Prepared for Further Schooling	General	26	2.6538	1.2310
	Advanced	142	2.4930	1.1283
Students are Adequately Prepared for Work	General	26	3.0385	1.4555
	Advanced	129	2.8062	1.2124
The School is a Safe Place	General	29	2.5517	1.4289
	Advanced	150	2.2667	.9808
The Rules for Behaviour are Strict	General	27	2.3704	1.2449
	Advanced	146	2.6096	1.3203
The Teaching is Good	General	26	2.5769	1.5013
	Advanced	147	2.2857	.8680
Teachers are Interested in Students	General	27	2.4815	1.3408
	Advanced	143	2.6014	.9797
Parents Have Adequate Say in Setting School Policy	General	22	3.0000	1.5119
	Advanced	118	2.8475	1.2098
Parents Work Together on School/Student Related Issues	General	23	2.5652	.9921
	Advanced	118	2.6271	1.0194
School Provides a Range of Programs for Students with Different Needs	General	22	1.9091	1.1088
	Advanced	125	2.3680	1.0043
Drinking on School Grounds is a Problem	General	18	4.8333	1.3827
	Advanced	100	4.7900	.9775
Drug Use on School Grounds is a Problem	General	19	4.0526	1.5447
	Advanced	97	4.2371	1.3368
Sale or Use of Drugs is a Problem	General	18	4.2222	1.5551
	Advanced	95	4.3158	1.3230
Theft on School Grounds is a Problem	General	18	4.0000	1.5339
	Advanced	100	3.8600	1.3485
Violence on School Grounds is a Problem	General	19	4.1053	1.5237
	Advanced	106	4.3585	1.1887
Lack of Discipline in Classrooms is a Problem	General	22	4.4545	1.2622
	Advanced	128	4.5938	1.0305

Table 8

Group Effect on Parents' Feelings about the High School

Test Statistics[a]

	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Priority on Learning	1892.500	-.425	.671
Homework Assigned is Worthwhile	1670.000	-.743	.458
Too Much Homework	1902.500	-.381	.703
Too Little Homework	1876.500	-.319	.750
Realistic Academic Standards	1828.500	-1.067	.286
Academic Standards Set Too Low	1557.000	-1.066	.286
Students are Adequately Prepared for Further Schooling	1730.000	-.551	.582
Students are Adequately Prepared for Work	1579.000	-.499	.618
The School is a Safe Place	2065.000	-.472	.637
The Rules for Behaviour are Strict	1749.000	-.984	.325
The Teaching is Good	1872.500	-.177	.860
Teachers are Interested in Students	1659.500	-1.225	.221
Parents Have Adequate Say in Setting School Policy	1242.000	-.338	.735
Parents Work Together on School/Student Related Issues	1336.000	-.128	.898
School Provides a Range of Programs for Students with Different Needs	935.500	-2.629	.009
Drinking on School Grounds is a Problem	789.000	-.968	.333
Drug Use on School Grounds is a Problem	867.000	-.426	.670
Sale or Use of Drugs is a Problem	848.500	-.054	.957
Theft on School Grounds is a Problem	836.000	-.499	.618
Violence on School Grounds is a Problem	926.000	-.605	.545
Lack of Discipline in Classrooms is a Problem	1352.000	-.336	.737

a. Grouping Variable: Groups

$p < .01$

are adequately prepared for further schooling", "the school is a safe place", "the rules for behaviour are strict", "the teaching is good", "teachers are interested in students", and "parents work together on school/student related issues". The difference in the means for each of these items was .33 or less between the advanced and general level group. Parents **strongly agreed** with the aspects of "too little homework", "students were adequately prepared for work", and "parents had adequate say in setting school policy". The difference in the means for each of these items was .16 or less. Parents **somewhat disagreed** with the aspects of "too much homework", "academic standards set too low", "drinking on school grounds was a problem", "drug use on school grounds was a problem", "sale or use of drugs was a problem", "theft on school grounds was a problem", "violence on school grounds was a problem", and "lack of discipline in classrooms was a problem". The difference in the means for each of these items was .25 or less.

There was a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) difference between the advanced and general level groups with regard to the aspect "school provides a range of programs for students with different needs" ($p = .009$, see Table 8). The mean for the general level group was 1.91; whereas, the mean for the advanced level group was 2.37. Parents of general level students agreed, while parents of advanced level students somewhat disagreed that the school provided a range of programs for students with different needs.

Parent Contact with Teenager's School

The third part of the questionnaire focused on parent contact with the teenagers' school. Eight aspects were included in question 16, but one item ("d") was excluded for the purposes of this analysis because it was so closely related to item "c". The four

original rating scales were collapsed to the two categories "none" or "one or more" phone calls to the school. Four variables (see Tables 9 and 10) resulted in no significant differences between the groups in relation to the number of times parents contacted the school:

1. grades or academic performance ($p = .284$);
2. academic program ($p = .631$);
3. parent participation in school activities ($p = .116$); and
4. information about how to help with specific skills or homework ($p = .151$).

The differences between the remaining three variables (see Table 11) were statistically significant ($p<0.05$) for question 16. Parents of students at the general level were more likely to contact the school one or more times in relation to their teenagers' plans after leaving high school ($p = .044$), their attendance ($p = .034$), and their behavior ($p = .011$).

Parents were asked to indicate in question 17 their knowledge about four aspects:

1. which courses their teenagers were taking during the semester;
2. how well their teenagers were performing in school;
3. how many credits their teenagers had earned towards graduation; and
4. how many more credits their teenagers needed in order to graduate.

There were no significant differences with respect to the "courses" ($p = 1.00$), "credits" ($p = 1.00$), and "graduate" ($p = .646$) aspects (see Table 12).

There was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in regard to the "wellteen" aspect (see Table 13). Parents of advanced level students were more knowledgeable about how well their teenagers were performing in school.

Table 9

Grades or Academic Performance

Grades

Crosstab

		GROUPS		Total
		Advanced	General	
Grades or Academic Performance	None	103	15	118
		67.3%	51.7%	64.8%
	Once or More	50	14	64
		32.7%	48.3%	35.2%
Total		153	29	182
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	2.516	2	.284
N of Valid Cases	182		

Academic Program

Crosstab

		GROUPS		Total
		Advanced	General	
Academic Program	None	119	21	140
		77.8%	72.4%	76.9%
	Once or More	34	8	42
		22.2%	27.6%	23.1%
Total		153	29	182
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.631
N of Valid Cases	182	

Table 10

Parent Participation in School Activities

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Parent Participation in School Activities	None	123	27	150
		79.4%	93.1%	81.5%
	Once or More	32	2	34
		20.6%	6.9%	18.5%
Total		155	29	184
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.116
N of Valid Cases	184	

Parent Contact about Specific Skills and Homework

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Parent Contact About How to Help with Specific Skills or Homework	None	134	22	156
		87.0%	75.9%	85.2%
	Once or More	20	7	27
		13.0%	24.1%	14.8%
Total		154	29	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.151
N of Valid Cases	183	

Table 11

Teenager's Plans

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Teenager's Plans	None	142	23	165
		92.2%	79.3%	90.2%
	Once or More	12	6	18
		7.8%	20.7%	9.8%
Total		154	29	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.044
N of Valid Cases	183	

Teenager's Attendance Record

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Teenager's Attendance Record	None	136	21	157
		88.9%	72.4%	86.3%
	Once or More	17	8	25
		11.1%	27.6%	13.7%
Total		153	29	182
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.034
N of Valid Cases	182	

Teenager's Behaviour in School

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Teenager's Behaviour in School	None	144	22	166
		92.9%	75.9%	90.2%
	Once or More	11	7	18
		7.1%	24.1%	9.8%
Total		155	29	184
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.011
N of Valid Cases	184	

Table 12

Courses Taken

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Courses Teens Were Taking During the Semester	Yes	152	29	181
		98.7%	100.0%	98.9%
	No	2		2
		1.3%		1.1%
Total		154	29	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		1.000
N of Valid Cases	183	

Credits Earned

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Number of Credits Earned Toward Graduation	Yes	114	20	134
		74.5%	69.0%	73.6%
	No	39	9	48
		25.5%	31.0%	26.4%
Total		153	29	182
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		1.000
N of Valid Cases	180	

Number of Credits Needed to Graduate

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Number of Credits Needed to Graduate Graduation	Yes	114	20	134
		74.5%	69.0%	73.6%
	No	39	9	48
		25.5%	31.0%	26.4%
Total		153	29	182
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.646
N of Valid Cases	182	

Table 13

How Well Teens Were Doing

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
How Well Teenager was Performing in School	Yes	151 98.7%	25 86.2%	176 96.7%
	No	2 1.3%	4 13.8%	6 3.3%
Total		153 100.0%	29 100.0%	182 100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.006
N of Valid Cases	182	

Family Life, Friends, and Activities in the Community

The operational definition for parent involvement included the concept that the more parents talked with their teens about various issues, the higher would be the expected level of involvement. The survey used nine items to measure the level of this type of parent involvement in question 19. There were no significant differences between the advanced and general level groups, with the exception of talking with teens about "specific jobs after high school" (see Tables 14 to 17).

The Likelihood Ratio was significant at .044. Parents of students at the general level spoke significantly ($p < 0.05$) more often to their teens about obtaining jobs after high school ($p = .044$) than did parents of students at the advanced level. This seemed to suggest those students graduating from a general level program were more likely to enter the workforce, whereas, students graduating from the advanced level program were more likely to pursue post-secondary education.

Family Rules

Family rules that pertained to "maintaining a certain grade average", "doing homework", and "attendance" were examined for both groups in question 20. There were no significant differences ($p > .005$) between the advanced and general level groups with regard to these three aspects (see Table 18). The results showed similar percentages of parent responses for both groups in each of the items tested

C. Student Record Variables and Relations to "Parent Questionnaire"

From the student record card variables the following information was gathered with respect to the number of absences, the final grade in English class, and the number of referrals to the discipline office. There were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 14

Discussion about Courses, School Activities, and Studies

Crosstab

		GROUPS		Total
		Advanced	General	
Selecting Courses or Programs at School	Never	5	1	6
		3.2%	3.4%	3.2%
	Sometimes	71	7	78
		44.9%	24.1%	41.7%
	Often	82	21	103
		51.9%	72.4%	55.1%
Total		158	29	187
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	4.659	2	.097
N of Valid Cases	187		

Crosstab

		GROUPS		Total
		Advanced	General	
School Activities or Events	Never	3		3
		1.9%		1.6%
	Sometimes	69	17	86
		44.5%	58.6%	46.7%
	Often	83	12	95
		53.5%	41.4%	51.6%
Total		155	29	184
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	2.748	2	.253
N of Valid Cases	184		

Crosstab

		GROUPS		Total
		Advanced	General	
Teenager's Studies	Never	3	1	4
		1.9%	3.4%	2.2%
	Sometimes	46	8	54
		29.5%	27.6%	29.2%
	Often	107	20	127
		68.6%	69.0%	68.6%
Total		156	29	185
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	.262	2	.877
N of Valid Cases	185		

Table 15

Discussion about Grades, SAT Test, and Colleges

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Teenager's Grades	Never	1		1
		.6%		.5%
	Sometimes	30	3	33
		19.2%	10.3%	17.8%
	Often	125	26	151
		80.1%	89.7%	81.6%
Total		156	29	185
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	1.848	2	.397
N of Valid Cases	185		

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test	Never	114	19	133
		74.0%	65.5%	72.7%
	Sometimes	26	6	32
		16.9%	20.7%	17.5%
	Often	14	4	18
		9.1%	13.8%	9.8%
Total		154	29	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	.942	2	.624
N of Valid Cases	183		

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Applying to Colleges or Other Schools	Never	34	7	41
		22.2%	24.1%	22.5%
	Sometimes	79	15	94
		51.6%	51.7%	51.6%
	Often	40	7	47
		26.1%	24.1%	25.8%
Total		153	29	182
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	.078	2	.962
N of Valid Cases	182		

Table 16

Discussion about Community Events and Things Troubling Teens

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Community, National, and World Events	Never	16	3	19
		10.3%	10.3%	10.3%
	Sometimes	77	20	97
		49.7%	69.0%	52.7%
	Often	62	6	68
		40.0%	20.7%	37.0%
Total		155	29	184
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	4.451	2	.108
N of Valid Cases	184		

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Things Troubling Your Teenager	Never	7		7
		4.5%		3.8%
	Sometimes	51	9	60
		33.1%	31.0%	32.8%
	Often	96	20	116
		62.3%	69.0%	63.4%
Total		154	29	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	2.614	2	.271
N of Valid Cases	183		

Table 17

Discussion about Jobs after High School

Crosstab

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Specific Jobs after High School	Never	25	1	26
		16.2%	3.4%	14.2%
	Sometimes	69	19	88
		44.8%	65.5%	48.1%
	Often	60	9	69
		39.0%	31.0%	37.7%
Total		154	29	183
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Likelihood Ratio	6.259	2	.044
N of Valid Cases	183		

$p<.05$

Table 18

Family Rules

RULEGRAD * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Rules to Maintain a Certain Grade Average	Yes	109	22	131
		70.3%	75.9%	71.2%
	No	46	7	53
		29.7%	24.1%	28.8%
Total		155	29	184
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.658
N of Valid Cases	184	

RULEHOWK * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Rules About Doing Homework	Yes	142	25	167
		91.6%	86.2%	90.8%
	No	13	4	17
		8.4%	13.8%	9.2%
Total		155	29	184
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.315
N of Valid Cases	184	

RULEATTE * GROUPS Crosstabulation

		GROUPS		
		Advanced	General	Total
Rules About Regular Attendance	Yes	146	29	175
		93.0%	100.0%	94.1%
	No	11		11
		7.0%		5.9%
Total		157	29	186
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Fisher's Exact Test		.218
N of Valid Cases	186	

differences between the general and advanced level groups (see Table 19). Students at the general level were absent from school more often ($p = .036$), had lower final grades in English class ($p = .000$), and had a higher number of referrals to the discipline office ($p = .018$) than did the students at the advanced level.

Attendance and Final English Grade

There was a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) correlation of -.215 between the variables of "attendance" and "final grade" for the advanced level group (see Table 20). The more times a student at the advanced level missed school the lower the final English grade. No relationship was found for students at the general level ($p = .830$). These findings suggested that regular attendance was related to the final grade of students at the advanced level, but not related to students at the general level.

Attendance and Number of Referrals to the Office

The student record variables of "attendance" and the number of "office referrals" were examined to determine whether absenteeism was related to the number of times a student was seen in the discipline office. No significant correlation was found for the general level group ($p = .865$). There was a statistically significant ($p<0.01$) correlation of .278 between these variables for the advanced level group ($p = .000$, see Table 21). The results showed that the higher the absenteeism for the advanced level group, the more often they were seen in the discipline office.

Teen Behaviour and Office Referrals

The "parent questionnaire" variable of teen behaviour and the student record card variable of the number of times students were referred to the office were studied to determine whether there was a relationship between the number of times parents

Table 19

Student Record Variables

Test Statistics [a]

	ATTENDAN	FINGRADE	OFFREFF
Mann-Whitney U	1918.000	1060.500	1691.000
Z	-2.096	-4.595	-2.365
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.000	.018

a. Grouping Variable: Groups

Attend and Offreff $p < .05$ Fingrade $p < .01$

Ranks

	Groups	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Attendance	General	29	102.86	2983.00
	Advanced	154	89.95	13853.00
	Total	183		
Final Grade	General	29	51.57	1495.50
	Advanced	158	101.79	16082.50
	Total	187		
Number of Office Referrals	General	29	114.69	3326.00
	Advanced	158	90.20	14252.00
	Total	187		

Table 20

Attendance and Final Grade

Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attendance	General	29	1.28	.53
	Advanced	154	1.10	.31
Final Grade	General	29	56.1034	14.4032
	Advanced	158	70.0823	12.4558
Number of Office Referrals	General	29	3.9310	5.3448
	Advanced	158	1.7468	2.8079

General Group

Correlations

			ATTENDAN	FINGRADE
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Attendance	1.000	-.042
		Final Grade	-.042	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Attendance	.	.830
		Final Grade	.830	.
	N	Attendance	29	29
		Final Grade	29	29

Advanced Group

Correlations

			ATTENDAN	FINGRADE
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Attendance	1.000	-.215**
		Final Grade	-.215**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Attendance	.	.008
		Final Grade	.008	.
	N	Attendance	154	154
		Final Grade	154	158

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 21

Attendance and Office Referrals

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attendance	1.28	.53	29
Office Referrals	3.9310	5.3448	29

General Group

Correlations

			ATTENDAN	OFFREFF
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Attendance	1.000	.033
		Office Referrals	.033	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Attendance	.	.865
		Office Referrals	.865	.
	N	Attendance	29	29
		Office Referrals	29	29

Advanced Group

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attendance	1.10	.31	154
Office Referrals	1.7468	2.8079	158

Correlations

			ATTENDAN	OFFREFF
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Attendance	1.000	.278**
		Office Referrals	.278**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Attendance	.	.000
		Office Referrals	.000	.
	N	Attendance	154	154
		Office Referrals	154	158

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

contacted the school about their teenagers' behaviour and the number of times students were referred to the discipline office. There was no significant ($p > 0.05$) correlation between these variables for the general level group (see Table 22). There was a significant correlation of .354 for the advanced level group ($p < 0.01$). The test findings showed that teen behaviour was related to the number of times a student at the advanced level was referred to the discipline office.

Table 22

Office Referrals and Teen Behaviour

General Group

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Office Referrals	3.9310	5.3448	29
Teen Behaviour	1.28	.53	29

Correlations

			OFFREFF	TEENBEHA
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Office Referrals	1.000	.207
		Teen Behaviour	.207	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Office Referrals	.	.280
		Teen Behaviour	.280	.
	N	Office Referrals	29	29
		Teen Behaviour	29	29

Advanced Group

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Office Referrals	1.7468	2.8079	158
Teen Behaviour	1.08	.29	155

Correlations

			OFFREFF	TEENBEHA
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Office Referrals	1.000	354**
		Teen Behaviour	.354**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Office Referrals		000
		Teen Behaviour	.000	
	N	Office Referrals	158	155
		Teen Behaviour	155	155

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

A. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between parent involvement and student achievement. The sample was divided into the advanced and general level groups of students to study if there were any differences between them. The family background was studied to ascertain whether family status had a bearing on parent involvement and student achievement. Parents were asked to identify if their teenagers had any behaviour difficulties that resulted in suspension or expulsion from school. Parents were also asked to evaluate the high school that their teenagers attended with respect to 21 aspects. Parent involvement was measured by the number of times that parents contacted the school in relation to seven aspects and their knowledge about four particular items. The level of parent involvement was also measured in accordance with the time that parents spent talking with their teens about various issues and the family rules about maintaining a certain grade average, about doing homework, and about regular attendance at school.

Prior to conducting the data analysis, it was clear that there was an imbalance between the advanced and general level groups of students. The parents of advanced level students had a much higher return rate than did the parents of the general level students. This imbalance of returned surveys between the groups might have impacted the results of this study.

The relationship between family background and the subjects was investigated. The results showed no significant differences between the advanced and general level

groups. The "Other" group showed a slightly higher response for general level students (14.3%) than the advanced level students (4.5%). The predominant respondent for both groups combined was the mother with an overall rate of 77%.

Family status in relation to the number of adults present (1 or 2) in the home was studied. There was no significant difference between the advanced and the general level groups. The majority of students (80.5%) from the entire sample were living with two adults present in the home.

Three aspects of parents' knowledge about their teenagers' school life were investigated. Parents indicated whether their teenagers had ever been considered a behaviour problem at school, had been suspended from school, or had been expelled from school. There were no significant differences between the advanced level and the general level groups with respect to having been considered a behaviour problem or having been expelled form school. Most parents (93.9%) reported that their teens had never been considered a behaviour problem at school. There was a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) difference between the advanced level and the general level students who were suspended from school. The results suggested that general level students were more likely to be suspended from school than were advanced level students. This difference was supported by the fact that 22.2% of general level students were suspended from school in comparison to 7.8% of advanced level students. Radwanski (1987) found the high school dropout rate in Ontario was between 31 and 33 percent. Of this group, 12% were from the advanced level, while 62% were registered in general level courses. Radwanski's findings were confirmed by the finding in this study that general level students were more likely to be suspended from school than were advanced level students. Behaviour

problems may also have been a major contributing factor to the unbalanced representation from the two groups in this study. General level students may have viewed this survey as a threatening experience or failed to understand the importance of delivering the survey to their parents.

Parents' feelings about the high school that their teenagers attended were explored. There were no significant differences between the advanced and general groups for the 21 aspects surveyed, with the exception of the "school provides a range of programs for students with different needs". Parents of both groups generally responded to the rating scale at the same level. There was a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) difference between the advanced and general groups with respect to the school providing a range of programs for different students' needs. A common concern for educators was the limited number of general level courses that were available for students to select. One possibility for the restricted general level course availability may have been related to the fact that general level students represented only 19.9% of the potential grade 10 population, which may have been a lower priority when it came to scheduling courses for the entire school population. Similarly, parents of general level students represented only 15.7% of the returned questionnaires. Parents of general level students were more satisfied than were parents of advanced level students with regard to student program needs. Parents of general level students may have been unaware of the narrow range of courses that were made available to their teenagers. Program availability for general level students may have been adversely impacted by the government funding cuts to education over the past four years. Parents of advanced level students had been accustomed to a wide range of possible course selection, which may account for the difference between

the two groups in relation to their lower level of satisfaction in comparison to parents of general level students with respect to program needs.

The number of times that parents contacted the school was examined in accordance with seven aspects. There were no significant differences between the advanced or general groups in relation to contact about grades or academic performance, the academic program, parent participation in school fundraising activities or volunteer work, or for information about how to help their teens with specific skills or homework. There were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) differences in relation to parent contact about teenagers' plans after leaving high school, their attendance, and their behaviour. Parents of general level students contacted the school more often about their teens' plans after high school, attendance, and behaviour than did parents of advanced level students. These results contradicted the findings of Lortie (1975) which showed that the parents' level of actions had an important effect on students' behaviour in class. Since parents of general level students contacted the school more often about behaviour, a decrease in behaviour problems was expected to follow in the classroom. However, general level students behaviour accounted for more suspensions from school in this study than did the behaviour of advanced level students whose parents contacted the school less often.

Parents reported their knowledge about what courses their teens were taking, how well their teens were performing in school, how many credits their teenagers had earned, and how many credits their teens needed to graduate. There were no significant differences between the advanced and general level groups with respect to the courses taken, credits earned, and credits needed to graduate. There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in relation to parents knowing how well their teenagers were performing at

school. Parents of general level students were more knowledgeable about how well their teens were performing in school. This finding was supported by the fact that parents of general level students contacted the school more often about behaviour issues than did parents of advanced level students. In an effort to deal with behaviour issues, parents of general level students were able to determine how well their teenagers were performing in their classes more so than were parents of advanced level students.

Parents were surveyed about nine aspects of discussion with their teenagers. There were no significant differences between the advanced and general groups, except in relation to talking with their teens about specific jobs after high school (statistically significant at $p < 0.05$). Parents of general level students spoke more often to their teens about obtaining jobs after high school than did parents of advanced level students. This finding suggested that students graduating from a general level program were more likely to enter the workforce directly after high school rather than pursuing post-secondary education. This result also suggested that general level students had a limited number of options available to them once they had graduated from high school. Even though post-secondary education was available to them, college courses that were specific to blue collar employment such as apprenticeship programs dictated the parameters of future employment possibilities. On the other hand, students who graduated from an advanced level high school program had much more flexibility in their choices regarding post-secondary education and employment opportunities.

Family rules about maintaining a certain grade average, doing homework, and attendance were examined. There were no significant differences between the responses of the advanced and general level groups. Parents from both groups responded at very

similar percentage rates. Lamm (1986) reported that parents needed to be educated that a child's education was not the sole responsibility of the school. Parents were expected to become more involved by working closely with the schools, emphasizing the importance of studying, and reducing the amount of time spent watching television. Parents of both groups in this study approached the rules about grades, doing homework, and attendance in a similar manner.

Student record card variables were gathered with respect to the number of absences, final grades, and the number of referrals to the discipline office. There was a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) difference between the advanced and general groups for each of the three variables. The findings showed that general level students were absent from school more often, had lower final grades in English class, and had more referrals to the discipline office than did advanced level students.

There was a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) correlation between attendance and final grade for advanced level students, but not for general level students. Given that parents of general level students contacted the school more often about attendance (see table 11) than did parents of advanced level students, these findings were quite unexpected. Prosise (1990) found that student achievement was positively influenced by parent involvement, but this was not supported in this study as general level students' grades were generally lower than were advanced level students' grades.

Also of interest, was the statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) correlation between attendance and the number of referrals to the discipline office for the advanced group, while no correlation existed for the general group. This raised the question as to why

general level students were not seen in the office because of absenteeism, as were advanced level students.

Teen behaviour and office referrals resulted in a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation for the advanced level group, but not the general level group. This result was completely unexpected since the more behaviour difficulties that students exhibit, the more often they should have been referred to the office. In practice, students with behaviour difficulties were most often registered in general level courses. Thus, these findings were not supportive of the common belief that the bulk of educational administrators' time was spent dealing with the behaviour problems that were inherent to general level students.

Overall, parents of general level students were involved in their teenagers' school life at similar rates with respect to grades or academic performance, the academic program, parent participation in school activities, and requesting information about specific skills or homework. Parents of general level students were more involved in connection to their teens' plans, attendance, and behaviour; however, the mean final grade for general level students was 56.1 in comparison to 70.0 for advanced level students. Since parents of general level students were more involved with their teens' plans, attendance, and behaviour, the expectation was for general level students to earn higher final grades. This indicated that the type of parent involvement might have been more important than the amount of parent involvement.

The relationship between parent involvement and student achievement was not clearly established in this research. There was a difference between the means of the advanced and general groups in relation to final grades, but precise evidence as to the

amount and type of parent involvement was not identified by the parent questionnaire in this study. The complexity of developing an operational definition that allowed for a more precise indicator of parent involvement precluded the opportunity to study the correlation between the type and amount of parent involvement in this study.

There was a relationship between student behaviour problems and achievement. General level students were referred to the office 3.93 times and received a mean final grade of 56.1 in comparison to advanced level students who were refereed to the office 1.74 times and received a mean final grade of 70.0. These results showed that the more often a student was referred to the office, the lower the expected final grade. Since general level students were seen more often in the office than were advanced level students, their in-class behaviour needed to be collaboratively investigated by parents, students, teachers, and administrators in order to ascertain better practices in dealing with behaviour issues. A partnership between all those concerned with increasing student achievement may have resulted in strategies that addressed the behaviour issues without resulting in lower final grades.

There was also a relationship between attendance and achievement, general level students were absent from school 1.28 days, while advanced level students were absent 1.1 days. The correlation between attendance and achievement was significant for advanced level students, but not for general level students. The results showed that absenteeism was a more reliable indicator of final grades for advanced level students than for general level students. Although absenteeism was expected to affect final grades for both groups, this was not supported by the findings of this study. The findings raised the question as to why attendance was more important for advanced level students than for

general level students who were considered to have more difficulties with regard to their learning experiences and in-class behaviour.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. This study should be replicated by including the entire grade 10, 11, and 12 population of English classes for both the advanced and general level programs offered in the city of Windsor, Ontario to obtain a broader and more representative sample of parent involvement and student achievement.
2. This study should be redesigned to include the teacher and administrator component of NELS:88 to provide a more accurate picture of how educators try to involve parents in their schools and academic programs.
3. Secondary School Reform initiated by the Minister of Education of Ontario will change the advanced/general level program designation to academic/applied. Any replication of this study after the 1999-2000 school year should take this change into consideration.
4. This study should be conducted in any provinces that are currently undergoing educational reform. This would allow for appropriate comparison samples to provide more reliable information about parent involvement and its relationship to student achievement.
5. The NELS:88 questionnaire is a large document that requires many researchers, a large budget, and countless hours of data analysis. The adapted parent questionnaire used in this study should be redesigned to more succinctly develop an operational definition of parent involvement. A shorter questionnaire that is clearly designed with

yes/no answers or numerical responses would allow for more accurate data analysis, particularly when looking for correlation between the variables. This process should precisely identify both the type and amount of parent involvement that may be related to student achievement.

6. This study should be replicated in such a way as to provide an opportunity for anecdotal responses through interviews or survey questions about the amount and type of parent involvement.
7. Considering that the mother completed 77% of the surveys because they best knew the child, schools might consider providing opportunities to involve fathers in their teenagers' educational experiences.
8. Educational administrators should explore alternative methods for dealing with students at the general level who may have some behaviour difficulties because they are more likely to be suspended than students at the advanced level. Early intervention programs such as regular contact with a guidance counselor or school social worker may provide these students with the necessary opportunity to work through any issue that might be troubling them before it becomes an issue in the classroom.
9. Schools should survey parents about the types of programs they believe are important to their teens. The results indicated that parents of students at the advanced level were less satisfied with the range of available programs than were the parents of students at the general level. Parents want to be involved in local decision-making (Livingstone, 1978).

10. In an effort to increase student achievement, schools need to take a more proactive approach when it comes to contacting parents. Overall, 85.2% of the parents had never contacted the school about how to help their teens with specific skills or homework. This aspect may be critically important to increasing both parent involvement and student achievement. Parents should take responsibility for their children's school attendance, discipline, and homework in conjunction with schools that initiate regular contacts with parents (Cavazos, 1989).
11. School boards need to be cognizant of the fact that teachers need the time to initiate parent contact in order to facilitate and enhance student achievement. Consequently, teachers require preparation time built into the school day to allow this very necessary contact to take place. Harris (1978) pointed out that teachers were responsible for defining and developing positive relationships with parents and that they needed to be generous with their time.
12. Parents' talking with their teens about any number of issues is a small but important link to improving communications. Schools could facilitate this process by developing interactive homework assignments that require parents and their teens to talk with one another and jointly complete the assignment. As Bond (1973) found, an inter-active homework program appeared to increase parent-child interaction and home-school connections, but teachers seemed to lose a sense of power.
13. Educational administrators need to explore the reasons as to why absenteeism does not affect final grades of students at the general level, but does affect final grades of students at the advanced level. Students in the general level appear to be able to miss school without having an adverse impact on their final grades. Scrutinizing teacher

evaluation practices and the learning expectations of the general level curriculum may provide the starting point for this type of investigation, particularly in light of Ontario's Secondary School Reform that will be implemented in September of 1999.

14. Teen behaviour is an indicator of the number of times students are referred to the discipline office. Perhaps educational administrators could involve parents with the first incident in an effort to conduct joint problem solving sessions, thereby reducing the possibility of further problems.
15. School boards should create a Parent Involvement Scholastic Partnerships team to develop and implement programs at each elementary and secondary school. There is a broad range of strategies in the literature from which to design programs that are unique to each school and its community. Of particular interest should be the work of Epstein (1983, 1991, 1994, & 1995) at John Hopkins University.
16. School administrators should conduct teacher in-service workshops to present the current research findings that stress the overall importance of parent involvement, particularly at the secondary level. These workshops could serve as the impetus for teaching staffs to collaboratively customize a parent involvement initiative for their individual school community and its needs. Rich (1988) claimed that teachers needed to be equipped with strategies aimed at home learning activities that reinforced practice in academic subjects, taught daily life skills, and fit the time of working parents.
17. The aspect of school suspensions should be examined in accordance with the dropout rates of students at both the advanced and general levels. Radwanski (1987) found that students at the general level represented 62% of all high school dropouts.

Investigating this aspect of would provide current information about Ontario's secondary students and their behaviour, as well as possible links to parent involvement.

CHAPTER VI

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Adapted from the NELS:88 Second Follow-up Parent Questionnaire

Confidential

Parent Involvement and Student Achievement

Study of 1998-1999

Parent Questionnaire

Prepared for: Faculty of Education
University of Windsor

Prepared by Marion Melville
in Partial Fulfillment for the
Master of Education Degree

USES OF THE DATA

The data from this survey will be used by myself and other educators to address important aspects regarding parent involvement and student achievement. The findings from this research may provide valuable information that school administrators will find helpful in the design and implementation of parent partnership programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The individuals who participate in this voluntary survey will have their right to privacy protected. Please know that:

1. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.
2. These questions enable the researcher to gather information about the effects that parent involvement might have on student achievement.
3. Your responses will be merged with those of others, and the answers you give will never be identified as yours.
4. Each student and parent will be identified through the use of a personal identification number (PIN).

On the cover of this questionnaire you will find the name and PIN of a teenager. Please check the cover to ensure that the teen named is one for whom you or your spouse or partner are responsible. The questionnaire should be completed by the parent or guardian who is most familiar with the student's current living situation and educational plans. If you are the appropriate person, please fill out the questionnaire and have the student named on the cover sheet return it to his or her English teacher by November 30, 1998. If neither you nor your spouse or partner is the appropriate person, please contact Marion Melville at 966-2504 to discuss the best way to get the questionnaire to the appropriate person, so that they may respond.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

PLEASE READ EACH QUESTION CAREFULLY

It is important that you follow the directions for responding to each kind of question. These are:

A. (CIRCLE ONE ONLY)

What is the colour of your eyes?

(CIRCLE ONE CATEGORY)

Brown 1

Blue 2

Green ..... (3)

Another colour 4

If the colour of your eyes is green, you circle the number 3 shown.

B. (CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

Do you plan to do any of the following next week?

	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. Rent a video	1	(2)	3
b. Go to a baseball game?	1	2	(3)
c. Have a dinner at a friend's house?	(1)	2	3

If you do not plan to rent videotape, are not sure about going to a baseball game next week, and plan to have dinner at a friend's house, you would circle one on each line as shown.

STUDENT PIN #_____

Part 1. Your Family's Background

1. What is your relationship and that of your spouse/partner to the teenager named on the front cover?

(CIRCLE ONE IN EACH COLUMN)

	You	Your Spouse/ Partner
Mother	01	01
Father	02	02
Stepmother	03	03
Stepfather	04	04
Grandmother	05	05
Grandfather	06	06
Other female relative	07	07
Other male relative	08	08
Other adult female (such as e.g. foster mother or guardian)	09	09
Other adult male (such as e.g. foster father or guardian)	10	10
Does not apply, no other parent/guardian	11	

2. What is your current status? **(CIRCLE ONE ONLY)**

Single, never married 1

Married 2

Divorced/separated 3

Widowed 4

Not married but living in a marriage-like relationship 5

3. Which best describes you and your spouse/partner's current employment situation right now?

(CIRCLE ONE IN EACH COLUMN)

	You	Your Spouse/ Partner
Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	01	01
Working full-time (35 hours per week or more)	02	02
This person has a job but is not at work right now because of temporary illness, layoff, or strike	03	03
Retired	04	04
In school (full-time)	05	05
Keeping house (full-time)	06	06
Not working, but looking for work	07	07
Not working and not looking for work	08	08
None of the above	09	09

4. For each year since 1995, did any of the following changes occur in your life?

(CIRCLE ONE IN EACH COLUMN)

	1995	1996	1997	1998
I divorced	A1	B1	C1	D1
I separated	A2	B2	C2	D2
I was widowed	A3	B3	C3	D3
I married or remarried	A4	B4	C4	D4
I began living with someone in a marriage-like relationship	A5	B5	C5	D5
None of these events occurred during this year	A6	B6	C6	D6

5. Do you ever have problems with any of the following?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Reading books, newspapers or magazines that are printed in English	1	2	3
b. Filling out forms (tax, insurance, financial aid) that are printed in English	1	2	3
c. Understanding your teenager's teachers	1	2	3
d. Making yourself understood to your teenager's teachers	1	2	3
e. Helping your teenager with homework in English	1	2	3

PART 2: YOUR TEENAGER'S SCHOOL LIFE

THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS DEALS WITH YOUR TEENAGER'S SCHOOL LIFE.

6. **Other than your teenager graduating from an elementary school, was there a reason for a more recent change of schools? If you answer no to item a , please skip to question 7.**

		(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE) Yes	No
a.	My teenager has recently changed schools	1	2
b.	School asked my teenager to leave because of disciplinary problems	1	2
c.	School asked my teenager to leave because of academic problems	1	2
d.	My teenager asked to be transferred to another school	1	2
e.	Family/teenager moved to take advantage of a specialized program in another school	1	2
f.	Family moved to a different location for other reasons	1	2
g.	School was closed or merged with another	1	2
h.	Wanted to switch from the public system to the separate system	1	2
i.	Wanted to take advantage of special courses offered at the new schools	1	2
j.	My teenager changed schools because he or she came to Canada from another country	1	2

7. **Has your teenager ever** ..... **(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)**

		Yes	No
a.	Been considered to have a behaviour problem at school?	1	2
b.	Been suspended from school?	1	2
c.	Been expelled from school?	1	2

8. In the last two school years, did your teenager ever stop attending school for a period of 5 or more consecutive school days for a reason other than illness or vacation?

(CIRCLE ONE ONLY)

Yes 1

No 2

9. In the last two school years, did your teenager ever stop attending school for a period of 10 or more consecutive school days for a reason other than illness or vacation?

(CIRCLE ONE ONLY)

Yes 1

No 2

10. Think back to the longest time over the last two years that your teenager was out of school for a reason other than illness or vacation. Which of the following reasons describes why your teenager stopped attending school?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. My teenager had a job that conflicted with school	1	2	3
b. My teenager couldn't get along with teachers or other students	1	2	3
c. My teenager was pregnant or became a parent	1	2	3
d. My teenager's friends or family member(s) had dropped school	1	2	3
e. My teenager was suspended or expelled from school	1	2	3
f. My teenager was getting poor grades/failing grades	1	2	3
g. My teenager had a drug or alcohol problem	1	2	3

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED NO TO QUESTIONS 8 AND 9, AS WELL AS NO TO EACH ITEM IN QUESTION 10, PLEASE SKIP FORWARD TO QUESTION 14.

11. Which of the following did you or your spouse/partner do after your teenager's longest absence from school for a reason other than illness or vacation?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

		Yes	No
a.	Called the principal, a teacher, or a counselor at your teenager's school	1	2
b.	Offered to send your teenager to a special school or program	1	2
c.	Arranged for outside counseling (with a private psychologist, social worker)	1	2
d.	Arranged for special tutoring	1	2
e.	Offered to help your teenager with personal problems	1	2
f.	Encouraged your teenager to stay in school	1	2
g.	Got angry at and/or punished your teenager	1	2
h.	Decided not to get involved	1	2

12. Which of the following did your teenager's school do during or after his or her longest absence from school for a reason other than illness or vacation?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

		Yes	No
a.	Someone from school called your home	1	2
b.	Someone from school visited your home	1	2
c.	The school sent you a letter	1	2
d.	The school offered to send your teenager to a special program or another school	1	2
e.	The school encouraged your teenager to stay in school	1	2
f.	The school offered your teenager special tutoring	1	2

12. Which of the following did your teenager's school do during or after his or her longest absence from school for a reason other than illness or vacation?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

		Yes	No
g.	The school offered to help your teenager make up work he/she missed	1	2
h.	The teacher offered to help your teenager with special problems	1	2
i.	The school made your teenager see a counselor	1	2
j.	The school threatened to suspend or expel your teenager	1	2
k.	The school suspended or expelled your teenager	1	2

13. How satisfied are you with the high school education your teenager has received up to now?

(CIRCLE ONE ONLY)

a. Somewhat satisfied 1

b. Very satisfied 2

c. Somewhat unsatisfied 3

d. Very unsatisfied 4

14. **Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements concerning the high school your teenager attends.**

	(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)						
	Somewhat Agree	**Strongly Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Don't Know**		
a. The school places a high priority on learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. The homework assigned is worthwhile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. The school assigns too much homework	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. The school assigns too little homework	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. The academic standards set by the school are realistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. The academic standards set by the school are too low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. The school is preparing students adequately for further schooling after high school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. The school is preparing students adequately for work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. The school is a safe place	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. Rules for behaviour are strict	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. The teaching is good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. Teachers are interested in students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Parents have an adequate say in setting school policy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements concerning the high school your teenager attends.

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
n. Parents work together on school/student related issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. The school provides a range of programs for students with different needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p. Drinking on school grounds is a problem at my teenager's school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q. Drug use on school grounds is a problem at my teenager's school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r. The sale or use of drugs on the way to or from school is a problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s. Theft on school grounds is a problem at my teenager's school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t. Violence on school grounds is a problem at my teenager's school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u. The lack of discipline in classrooms is a problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

PART 3: PARENT CONTACT WITH TEENEAGER'S SCHOOL

THE NEXT GROUP OF QUESTIONS ASKS ABOUT YOUR CONTACT WITH YOUR TEENAGER'S SCHOOL.

15. Since your teenager started high school, how many times have you or your spouse/partner been contacted by the school about the following?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	None	Once or Twice	3 or 4 times	More than 4 times
a. Your teenager's grades or academic performance (not including report cards)	1	2	3	4
b. Your teenager's academic program for this year	1	2	3	4
c. Your teenager's plans after leaving high school	1	2	3	4
d. Your teenager's course selection for entry into college, vocational, or technical school after leaving high school	1	2	3	4
e. Your teenager's attendance record at school	1	2	3	4
f. Your teenager's behaviour in school	1	2	3	4
g. You and/or your spouse/ partner participating in school fundraising activities or doing volunteer work	1	2	3	4
h. Information on how to help your teen at home with specific skills or homework	1	2	3	4

16. Since your teenager started high school, how many times <u>have you or your spouse/partner contacted</u> the school about each of the following?
(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	None	Once or Twice	3 or 4 times	More than 4 times
a. Your teenager's grades or academic performance	1	2	3	4
b. Your teenager's academic program for this year	1	2	3	4
c. Your teenager's plans after leaving high school	1	2	3	4
d. Your teenager's course selection for entry into college, vocational, or technical school after leaving high school	1	2	3	4
e. Your teenager's attendance record at school	1	2	3	4
f. Your teenager's behaviour in school	1	2	3	4
g. You and/or your spouse/ partner participating in school fundraising activities or doing volunteer work	1	2	3	4
h. Information on how to help your teen at home with specific skills or homework	1	2	3	4

17. Do you know... **(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)**

	Yes	No
a. Which courses your teenager has been taking this past semester?	1	2
b. How well your teenager is performing in school?	1	2
c. How many credits your teenager has earned towards graduation?	1	2
d. How many more credits your teenager needs in order to graduate?	1	2

18. Do you believe that parents of students in your teenager's school should have more influence, less influence, or do they have about the right amount of influence regarding the following?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Less Influence	Right Amount of influence	More Influence	Don't Know
a. Deciding how school funds should be spent	1	2	3	4
b. Curriculum	1	2	3	4
c. Selection and hiring of administrators	1	2	3	4
d. Books and instructional materials	1	2	3	4
e. Selection and hiring of teachers	1	2	3	4
f. Books placed in the school libraries	1	2	3	4
g. Evaluation of teachers and administrators	1	2	3	4
h. Amount of homework assigned	1	2	3	4
i. Discipline policies	1	2	3	4
j. Academic standards	1	2	3	4

THE NEXT GROUP OF QUESTIONS ASKS ABOUT YOUR TEENAGER'S FAMILY LIFE, FRIENDS, AND ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY.

19. How frequently during the past two years have you and/or your spouse/partner talked about the following with your teenager?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Never	Sometimes	Often
a. Selecting courses or programs at school	1	2	3
b. School activities or events of particular interest to your teenager	1	2	3
c. Things your teenager has studied in class	1	2	3
d. Your teen's grades	1	2	3
e. Preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	1	2	3
f. Applying to colleges or other schools after high school	1	2	3
g. Specific jobs your teen might apply for after high school	1	2	3
h. Community, national, and world events	1	2	3
i. Things that are troubling your teenager	1	2	3

20. Are there family rules that are enforced for your teenager about any of the following activities?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Yes	No
a. Maintaining a certain grade average	1	2
b. Doing homework	1	2
c. Attending school regularly	1	2

PART 4: TEENAGER'S FRIENDS

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TEENAGER'S FRIENDS.

21. How many parents do you talk to from time to time who have teenagers who attend the same school as your teenager? (If you know both the father and mother in one family, please consider them together as one parent).

(CIRCLE ONE ONLY)

a. None 01

b. One or two 02

c. Three to five 03

d. Six to ten 04

e. Eleven to twenty 05

f. More than twenty 06

22. How often do you talk to the parents of your teenager's friends about each of the following topics?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)

	Seldom or never	**Once or twice a month**	**Once or twice a week**	**Almost every day**
a. Things that are going on at your teenager's school	1	2	3	4
b. Your teenager's educational plans for after high school	1	2	3	4
c. Your teenager's career plans	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B

FACULTY OF EDUCATION THESIS APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
WINDSOR

1998 03 09

Ms. Marion Melville
1423 George
Windsor, Ontario
N8Y 2Y1

Dear Ms. Melville,

I am pleased to inform you that the graduate Committee has approved your petition to fulfil the requirements for the MEd degree by means of a thesis under the supervision of Dr. Linda McKay.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend best wishes for the success of your research.

Sincerely,

Donald Laing
Professor and Coordinator of Graduate Studies
Faculty of Education

cc: Dr. Linda McKay

APPENDIX C

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

Faculty of Education: Research Ethics Committee

Statement of Approval

To whom it may concern:

The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education has reviewed the proposed research involving human subjects specified below. In the judgement of the Committee, the proposed research is in accord with the principles of ethical research approved by the Council of the Faculty and the Senate of the University of Windsor.

Title:

Parent Involvement and Student Achievement in English Canada

Researcher(s):

Marie Melville

Date: Apr 12/98

Larry Morton, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education
University of Windsor

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO PARENT/GUARDIAN

10 16 1998

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am currently undertaking a research study investigating parent involvement and achievement of high school students registered in general and advanced level English courses. This study is in partial fulfillment of the Master of Education Degree at the University of Windsor. Dr. Linda McKay and Dr. Erika Keundiger from the Faculty of Education are serving as thesis advisors for this research. Permission to conduct this research has been obtained from the Faculty of Education, District School Board xxxx, and from our principal, xxxx xxxxx xxxxxx.

As your child has been randomly selected to be a subject of this research, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire in March of 1999 about your children, their school experiences, and the circumstances surrounding your contact with the school. All students who have been selected will be assigned a personal identification number (PIN) in order to keep all information collected completely anonymous. Neither you nor your child will be identified in the research by any means other than the student PIN.

Any questions you may have regarding this research can be addressed to either myself (966-2504) or Dr. Linda McKay (253-4232). If you decide that you would not like to participate, please call or write the school before October 30, 1998. The results of this research will be available upon request in January of the year 2000.

Respectfully yours,

Marion Melville
English Department
xxxxxxxxxx High School

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO TEACHERS

Marion Melville
xxxxxxxxxx High School
English Department

10 16 1998

Dear Classroom Teacher:

I am writing to request your assistance to conduct a research study that will form the basis of my Master of Education thesis at the University of Windsor. Dr. Linda McKay and Dr. Erika Keundiger from the Faculty of Education are serving as thesis advisors.

The study will investigate the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement, as well as examine the differences between these variables in general and advanced level high school students. Each grade 10 English class at the general and advanced level will be included in this study. The parents will be asked to complete a 38 point survey. The data will be collected in a confidential manner for student attendance, the number of referrals to the discipline office, final grades, and extra-curricular activities. Approval to conduct this research, has to date, been approved by the University of Windsor Ethics Committee, the Faculty of Education, the Director of Education, and xxxx xxxxxx xxxxx, principal of xxxxxxxxxx High School.

Approximately 165 xxxxxxxxxx students have been selected as subjects of this study. The collection of final graded data will take place in February and June of 1999. You will receive a form to complete regarding the final grades for any students who are both under your instruction and included in this research.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation. The results of this research will be available upon your request in January of the year 2000.

Respectfully yours,

Marion Melville

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